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OR,

BREAKING THE EUREKA SPIDER'S WEB.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH,
AUTHOR OF "BUCKSKIN DETECTIVE," "PHIL
FLASH," "BOY SHADOW," "DODGER
DICK" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A BOY AND HIS FLUTE.

"GREAT HEZEKIAH! that reminds me of old times!"

The person who gave utterance to this exclamation was, judging from his appearance, a new arrival in New York, and he leaned against a telegraph pole and looked up at one of the

HAPPY HUGH THE BOY-MUSICIAN DETECTIVE



THE COUNTRYMAN LOOKED AT THE SCENE, AND, SMILING, WAITED UNTIL THE HORN-PIPE WAS FINISHED.

open third story windows of a large tenement house.

He was "countrified" all over, but, notwithstanding his looks, he was a handsome old man of sixty or thereabouts, and his home-made garments, a little the worse for steady wear, well-fitted his well-fed figure.

Down from the window which he eyed so closely, and through the gathering dusk of a summer's day, came the musical notes of a flute.

This it was that had reminded the countryman of "old times."

He listened entranced until the lively tune came to an end, and then seeing in the doorway of the human hive a large woman with bronzed arms akimbo, he stepped nimbly forward:

"Who might be making the noise up there?" inquired the old man.

The woman grinned.

"It might be Ole Bull from the way that flute goes, but it isn't," said she.

"I judge not. I've been listening spell-bound ever since I caught the first note. Nelly used to be handy with the flute when she was quite young."

"Could she play like that boy?"

"A boy, is it?"

"Yes, you've been listening to a concert by Happy Hugh. If there's a cricket in New York happier than him, I'd like to see it."

"And I'd like to see the boy himself."

"You would, eh? Well, that's the easiest thing in the world though you'll have to climb three flights. We've got no elevators in this rookery."

The stranger stepped inside.

"Happy Hugh's playin' again as you can hear," continued the woman. "The flute will guide you. He's on the third floor, second door to the left."

The man bounded up the dirty stairs with the agility of a person not half his age, and the notes of the flute as it played a merry hornpipe, indicated the right door, which stood half ajar.

Pushing it open the caller saw a small room almost square. Its furniture consisted of a cot, a table and two chairs, one of the latter being occupied at the time by a boy of sixteen, who seemed to be putting his whole soul into the flute.

The countryman looked at the scene, and smiling, waited until the hornpipe was finished; then he stepped into the room.

"Hello!" cried the boy, looking up. "Did I draw you up here?"

"That's exactly what you did. Your playing made me think of old times."

"My playing? Then you used to play when—"

"No, I never had a flute to my lips, but Nelly had."

"Nelly?"

"Ah, you never knew her!"

The countryman was now standing in front of the boy musician who was looking up into a face which had suddenly grown sad.

"I know two or three Nellys, but I guess neither of them is yours," he said. "Do you know who I am?"

"I've just heard that they call you Happy Hugh."

"Yes, because I keep the air astir and the people awake with my flute. Happy Hugh! But of course I've got another name."

"Certainly," nodded the old man. "My name is Ahijah Axtell."

Happy Hugh's deep brown eyes seemed to open to their widest extent.

"Axtell?" he exclaimed. "Not the owner of—"

He checked himself and looked the old man over from head to foot.

"The owner of Axtell, the flyer? No, I'm not that lucky chap. I own a few good horses, but they're plugs alongside of him."

"That's 'Axtell,'" said Happy Hugh, calling his visitor's attention to a newspaper print on one of the walls. "I keep nearly all the celebrities of the day here."

One would have thought so, and Mr. Axtell evidently did, for the four walls of the room were literally covered with illustrations cut from the pictorial papers of the day, and when the boy's visitor had given them a glance he turned to the young flutist again.

"I'm looking for Nelly," he said in a serious voice.

"Is she lost?"

"Nelly Axtell is lost," was the reply. "The girl is my grand-daughter. She went away from home five years ago when she was nearly fifteen."

"Did she come to New York?"

"We think she did."

"Alone?"

Happy Hugh had become interested in the old man's story.

"We're not so sure about that," answered Ahijah. "I may be on a wild-goose chase, but I can't give Nelly up. I got a letter some days ago." He felt in one of his pockets as he spoke. "It wasn't dated, and all we had to go by was the post-mark."

With this he produced the letter, which he handed without reserve to Happy Hugh.

"It came from New York, I see," said the boy, who had previously turned on the gas.

Mr. Axtell nodded.

"I want you to read it," he said. "It contains no secrets, but there's some tall lying in it."

Happy Hugh relieved the envelope of its contents, which consisted of a single sheet of paper, on one side of which, in a disguised hand, was the following:

"OLD MAN AXTELL:—

"You are wasting time looking for Nelly, the runaway. She's perfectly happy where she is, and wants to be forgotten by those whose name she once bore. She is Nelly Axtell no longer, and she wouldn't own you if you were to find her. She'll send for her legacy one of these days. So, don't waste your money on a profitless search, but keep it for a rainy day. JACK XERXES."

"That's a funny name!" said Happy Hugh, "and, of course, it don't belong to the person who wrote that letter."

"Of course it don't," echoed Mr. Axtell.

"There isn't such a name as 'Jack Xerxes' in any Directory in the United States," pursued the boy. "But, why should Nelly want to run away?"

"She hadn't any need to, and Heaven knows I never accused her of doing so. One evening she went to fetch the cows, and that's the last we saw of Nelly."

"It is strange, sure enough," commented Happy Hugh.

"I should say so. She disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed her. Nelly was the only girl I ever knew who took to the flute. I don't know how she came to like that sort o' music, but she liked no other kind. When I heard you playing—and playing some of Nelly's old tunes—I had to stop and listen, and come up to see you."

"I'm glad you came up," said the boy.

"When did you come to town?"

"I've been here a week."

"Looking for Nelly?"

"Well, I've been doing nothing else. I'm nearly played out."

"I believe it. This is a big city."

"The biggest I ever saw."

"Have you told your story to the police?"

"No, and I'll tell you why I haven't, boy. I don't want anybody to know I'm here. Tell the police, and the newspaper men will have the whole story in a short time, and I don't want to head a sensation. I prefer to look for Nelly without any brass band business about my mission. Happy Hugh, I believe that if I had you with me for a few days we'd find her."

"Why so?"

"You see, I'd have you play on your flute in different quarters of the city, and if Nelly was around we'd know it."

"That's not a bad idea," laughed the boy.

"But, let us go back to that letter. The man who wrote it knows what became of Nelly."

"To be sure he does, the villain!" cried Mr. Axtell, clinching his hand. "When he says that Nell wants to be forgotten by us he lies in the blackest heart in a human breast! Nelly was an Axtell all over. I know she didn't quit us of her own accord. I'm afraid I am wasting the best years of my life looking for her, but I couldn't waste 'em in a better cause. I tell you—"

Just then a footstep fell at the open door and a voice broke forth:

"When will you come round, Hugh?" it said.

Before the boy could reply Mr. Axtell turned and caught a glimpse of a thick-set man who stood in the doorway.

"I'll be down in a few minutes, major," answered the boy, at which the man said "All right!" and withdrew.

"Who was that?" asked Ahijah Axtell, his face a curious study.

"That's the manager of the Eureka Employment Bureau three squares below," said the boy. "He's a queer chicken and knows where the dollars are, every time. I guess you never saw the major before."

"I'm not so sure about that," exclaimed Axtell. "I've got a pretty good memory. If I've never seen 'the major,' as you call him, I once had a glimpse of his brother."

"When was that?"

"The day before Nelly went away."

Hugh looked at the old countryman with a smile.

"I don't think the major's been out of New York once in ten years," said he, and then, as he slipped the flute into his pocket he continued seriously:

"I'm going to help you find Nelly, Mr. Axtell."

"You?" exclaimed the old man, drawing back in surprise.

"Why not? It looks to me like a rascally piece of business, and, then, I've searched for lost people before. Will you let me help you?"

Ahijah Axtell's eyes suddenly glowed with delight, and this was answer enough.

CHAPTER II.

HAPPY HUGH'S DISCOVERY.

A FEW minutes after this Hugh was on his way to keep his promise with the man whom he had called "the major."

The boy, before parting with Ahijah Axtell, had obtained his present city address, and the letter signed "Jack Xerxes" reposed snugly in his pocket.

"That was a strange meeting, and I'm interested," said Hugh, while he walked along. "I believe, with the old gentleman, that there's some well-laid plot at the bottom of the girl's disappearance. Some sleek rascal is playing a trump card, and I'm going to try to find out who it is. I won't tell Phelan, not now, at any rate." Phelan was a detective friend of his. "Phil of late likes to get all the glory he can without doing much hard work. No," decidedly, "he sha'n't hear of this matter at present. I'll pipe the case a while on my own hook, and see what it yields me. Mr. Axtell mentioned some things which I must not forget. He surprised me several times. If lost Nelly, the flute-player, is living, she's a young lady, and one worth looking at, too, from what her grandfather says."

By this time Hugh had nearly reached his destination, and a little further on he disappeared in an open hallway, and bounded up a long flight of steps to the bachelor quarters of the Manager of the Eureka Employment Bureau.

"The Major," or Joly Jenkins, as he very often signed his name, was, in his own estimation, at least, a very important personage. He was a thick-set individual with a round face which boasted of closely-cropped mutton-chop whiskers, and a very heavy mustache, the ends of which had a decided curl.

His age was about forty, though he did not show it. He was tasty in dress, and, being fond of good living, took his meals at the "Golden Eagle Restaurant," which was "just around the corner," and the swellest establishment of the kind in that part of the city.

As we have heard Happy Hugh inform Mr. Axtell, Joly Jenkins knew how to make money. The Bureau did a good business, and its dupes were many. Everybody who registered on its books as seeking employment was required to deposit a fee, and, if work was found, another fee was forced from the victim.

The major did not pose as the proprietor of the industry. He was merely the manager, and Happy Hugh always thought that the handsome man who sometimes dropped in and held a confidential talk with Joly, in the private office, was the real head of the concern.

Mr. Jenkins was the boy's musical pupils on the flute.

Hugh nearly laughed in his face when one day he said he wanted to learn how to play that instrument, and as he offered to pay well for instructions the young flutist was not adverse to giving him all the "pointers" he could.

"Teach that fellow to play the flute?" exclaimed Hugh as he walked home after the first lesson. "I'd as soon undertake to teach an elephant to whistle!"

When the boy reached the major's rooms after his interview with Mr. Axtell, he found his pupil waiting for him.

It was a warm evening, and numerous drops of sweat which glistened on Joly Jenkins's brow told Hugh that he had been practicing.

"Did the old fellow I saw in your room want to learn the flute?" asked Mr. Jenkins.

"Not exactly," answered the boy. "He heard me from the sidewalk, and, having an ear for music, came up to listen."

"I didn't see his face, but he seemed to be a fresh arrival in the city. You didn't mention the Bureau, I presume?"

"Yes, I did," quickly responded Hugh. "I do that whenever I can."

"Ever so much obliged," said Joly, picking

up his flute, and in a little while the two were in the midst of a lesson.

"Do you think I'll ever learn?" asked Jenkins, half despondingly during one of the pauses.

"I think you have every reason to be encouraged," replied the teacher, with a twinkle in his eye which escaped his pupil's observation. "Why, I've known ladies to become good performers on the flute while woman's forte is the piano."

"Female flutists are rare, I guess, but several have come under my notice, one in particular."

"Does she play well?" eagerly questioned the boy.

"She's simply a marvel with the instrument; I never heard anything like it."

"I should like to hear her."

"She isn't in the city and hasn't been, for a long time."

"Major Joly Jenkins, you are stretching the truth just now," decided Hugh under his breath. "You've seen and heard Nelly Axtell, and a sly fox like yourself needs watching. Here we go again. I'll know more before I go home to-night."

The flutes started off again, and at the end of an hour they were put away, for the lesson was finished and the manager of the "Eureka" was mopping his face.

"What ever became of your brother, major?" suddenly asked Happy Hugh.

"My brother?" exclaimed Jenkins. "I never had one."

Hugh affected surprise.

"I must be mistaken," said he. "I thought you once told me about a brother."

"I could not when I had none, you know. I am an only child. I was born in Jersey, came over to New York in short dresses, and have been here ever since."

"You have a nice place, major."

"A good job," was the reply. "I have built up an excellent business for my employer."

"For Mr. Denman?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"I think I've seen him," answered Hugh, recalling the man who sometimes visited Jenkins at the Bureau.

"It's no great secret that Mr. Denman is the real head of the concern," continued Jenkins, "but I'm the actual water that turns the wheel. Without me the Bureau would go out of existence in a week, and Denman knows this. We booked forty-nine applications to-day, and 'crossed off,' or, in other words, secured places, for nine people."

"You're an indispensable," said Happy Hugh. "I guess Denman thinks so. By the way, I will show you what I've done."

Joly Jenkins conducted the boy musician to the private office of the Eureka Employment Bureau, which was directly beneath the room they had been occupying.

It was a small apartment, rather lavishly furnished. A soft carpet deadened the sounds of footsteps, and there was a large easy-chair upholstered in red plush for the major's accommodation.

Joly unlocked an elaborate desk and took therefrom a finely bound ledger, which he invited the lad to inspect.

"Here's to-day's work," said the manager, running his finger down the page. "You see a lot of queer names. We catch 'em here, for some mighty odd fish come to our net."

"So they do," rejoined the boy, who was going over the names that had been booked that day.

"Do you post the ledger yourself, major?"

"Always. It's the last thing done before the Bureau closes," said Joly. "I don't write a copper-plate hand, but it's readable, and that's enough."

"That's a funny name!" exclaimed Hugh at this juncture, putting his finger upon an entry near the bottom of the page. "You don't find many people nowadays whose names begin with X."

"Not many, and that's one of the few."

"James Xenthen," read the young musician.

"The fellow was as odd looking as his name."

"A foreigner of course, major?"

"Yes."

All the time Hugh was studying that one name. Why did it attract him more than the others equally odd on the same page?

"I'm going into the office for a moment," said Joly. "Run over the book and get an idea of the business we do."

A moment later Hugh was the sole tenant of the private office. The business room of the bureau adjoined the office, and Hugh could hear Joly in there, evidently hunting for something in the dark.

All at once Happy Hugh's hand flew to the inside pocket of his coat, and in another instant he had drawn forth the letter signed "Jack Xerxes."

Jerking the document from its envelope, he bent over the ledger and placed the signature just under the entry. "James Xenthen."

His eyes seemed to dilate with victory. He noticed the formation of the letters in the two names. He saw that the "J's" and the "X's" were strangely alike, though in the name "Jack Xerxes" there was an attempt to disguise.

Hugh dared not investigate too long; but he looked as long as he heard Joly in the business room, and when footsteps moved toward him, the "Jack Xerxes" letter went back into his pocket.

Mr. Jenkins came in presently with a box of cigars under his arm.

"I found 'em at last!" exclaimed the manager, catching sight of Hugh, and at the same time tapping the end of the box. "I told Nips, my clerk, to bring 'em into the office, but business was so brisk just after he bought 'em that I suppose he forgot."

If there was on the boy's face at this time a trace of the discovery he had made, Joly Jenkins did not appear to see it. He opened the box and made the young flutist take several cigars, after which he filled his own pockets.

"I reckon I can't show you anything more to-night," said the major. "Drop in often and see us at work. The 'Eureka' is going to be the boss Employment Bureau of the city. Going home, eh? Well, good-night, Mr. Hugh."

Hugh touched his hat, said good-night and started off, but half a block away he looked back at the figure of his pupil and said aloud:

"You wrote that letter, Joly Jenkins!"

CHAPTER III.

HUGH DECEIVES A FRIEND.

THE young musician detective soon dropped into a slow, thoughtful gait.

"One discovery generally suggests another," he mused.

"Now, I have no doubt that the person who wrote James Xenthen's name upon the page of Joly Jenkins's ledger signed 'Jack Xerxes' to the letter I have in my pocket. Why did Mr. Jenkins take such a sudden notion to learn the flute? He told me when I first became acquainted with him and that was a year ago, when I gave the Eureka Bureau a trial, that he detested music; but all once he decides to become my pupil, and he is doing his best. One would think that he is dead in love with a girl who loves flute notes. I must look into this matter as well as watch Joly Jenkins, for, if I'm not entirely mistaken, I'm dealing with one of the shrewdest scamps in this city of crooks."

Hugh went back to his lodgings and found on the floor when he had opened the door a piece of paper which had been thrown into the room through an open transom.

Picking it up he unfolded the little sheet and read:

"HUGH MY BOY:—Come to me when you read this, no difference what the hour. I think I have something for both of us, but especially for yourself. I am at home waiting for you and very anxious."

PHIL.

"I don't know 'bout this," said Hugh. "Shall I go to Phelan? I don't want to be taken from the trail I think I have just struck; and, on the other hand, I'm anxious to keep on the good side of Phil."

For ten minutes the boy debated the question which confronted him, and at last, putting the note in his pocket, he decided to go and see what "Phelan" wanted.

Phil Phelan, the detective, had a room a good many squares from the humble nest occupied by the young flutist, but the boy's nimble legs soon covered the distance, and at ten o'clock he ran up a stairs and burst into his friend's abode.

Phelan welcomed him with an exclamation of joy.

"You're in good time but I feared you wouldn't find my note till late," said he. "I think we've got another case—a real mystery, Hugh. I remember learning something about it at the time, but it had slipped my mind, and, if I hadn't accidentally encountered old Hayseed to-night, I don't suppose I would have thought of it again."

At the phrase "old Hayseed" Hugh started, and his thoughts recurred to Ahijah Axtell, the old Jerseyman.

"There is stopping at an obscure hotel a short distance up-town," continued Phelan, "an old gentleman who came to the city about a week since in search of his granddaughter who left his house some five years ago. I ran against the

old fellow quite unexpectedly and as he is somewhat loquacious when you get on the right side of him, I soon had his story."

"Confound it!" mentally exclaimed the little musician. "I must tell old 'Hijah to watch his tongue. Phelan's all O. K.; but I want to work this case myself, just now."

The detective did not appear to notice the boy's displeasure.

"The old fellow's name is Axtell," he went on. "He's got lots of money and is willing to spend every dollar of it in the search for 'Nelly.' He tells a pretty straight story, and his theory is that the girl did not go away of her own accord. He is inclined to believe that she came, or, rather, was brought, to New York."

"Five years ago?" asked Hugh, as if the story of Nelly Axtell was new to him. "And he is now here looking for her?"

"Yes."

Hugh seemed to lean toward Phelan, the detective.

"Phil, don't you think it's a cold trail?" he asked.

"Rather cold, I admit, Hugh, but—"

"Well, what?"

"Old Hayseed's well fixed," finished Phelan, with a grin.

"Got lots of stuff, eh?"

"Thousands of it. Besides this, there's a fortune coming to the girl herself, but in a way that is rather hard to understand from the few words the old chap let drop about it. Anyway, if the girl, Nelly, was stolen, you may bet your head with safety that the parties who did it know all about the fortune."

"Perhaps," replied the boy; "but, I don't like these cold trails. Just think of it, Phil. According to 'Hijah Axtell's story, for five years he has heard nothing of Nelly. A good many people die every day, the young as well as the old. If the girl didn't go off on her own hook don't you think she'd have turned up long ago in some way? Wouldn't she have written to her grandparents? She would have to have a mighty cold heart not to have done something of the kind."

"It looks as you say, Hugh," admitted Phelan. "I had thought the whole thing over before you came. I tell you it would be more than a feather in our cap if we could find Nelly Axtell; it would be a fortune in our pockets."

"Right you are, Phelan."

With this Hugh fell back and looked at his friend.

"When I wrote the note you found in your room, I thought we had struck a bonanza; now—"

"You don't think so?" broke in Hugh.

"It doesn't look quite so flattering; but still, there's a chance."

"Did Mr. Axtell describe Nelly to you? Didn't he tell you about her peculiarities?"

"He told me how she looked when she went away."

"Nothing about her ways?"

"Nothing."

Hugh was rejoiced.

Ahijah Axtell had not gone as far as he feared. He had told Phelan nothing about Nelly's passion for flute-playing, and evidently had not mentioned the letter signed "Jack Xerxes."

"Well, what do you think?" finally asked Phelan.

"I must go back to my first comment, Phil. It's a cold trail."

Phelan said nothing for a moment.

"I think I shall drop it," he said. "You can't tell why nor how Nelly Axtell left home, no matter what her grandfather's opinions may be. However, if you choose, you may make it a point to drop into the old fellow's hotel and pump him."

The young musician detective took out a notebook and seriously wrote down the Jerseyman's name and present address.

He had come out of the interview better than he had expected. Phelan did not suspect that he had ever seen Axtell, much less that he was interested in his affairs, and, eager to get away, he bade the detective good night and hurried off.

"I've got to bridle 'Hijah Axtell's tongue before I do anything else," said Hugh to himself when he came down out of Phelan's room and found the lighted lamps about him. "I don't want everybody to hear this story and there's no telling how many have heard it already. It's rather late for the Jerseyman, and I suppose I'll catch him in bed; but, bed or no bed, I must post him before I sleep. This is my case exclusively, and I'm going to manage it as I think best."

Taking a car, Hugh went up-town to within a square of Mr. Axtell's hotel, and it was

not far from twelve o'clock when he walked up to the clerk's desk.

Of course he was told that Ahijah Axtell had been in bed three hours and more, and when he insisted upon seeing him he was met by a look of astonishment.

"Do you know him?" asked the clerk.

"To be sure I do. Do you think I'd punch up a stranger at this hour?"

"Won't to-morrow do?"

"If you think it will just keep me from your guest till then, and there's no cab in New York swift enough to take him to another public hash shop."

This was too much.

"Come along. The bell-boy is up in the fifth story," which made Hugh smile for the house had but three floors.

In a few moments the wilted clerk was pounding on the door of room 34, and presently the voice of Axtell demanded to know what was wanted.

"That's Uncle 'Hijah," said Hugh. "You can go now."

"Hello! here I am again!" continued the boy, as the door opened exposing the Jerseyman in short garments.

"You? Well, I'm squashed!"

"Not fatally, I hope," answered Hugh, slipping into the room.

The old man shut the door, drew back and looked at the lad.

"You haven't found Nelly already have you?" he exclaimed.

"No, but I'm not without hope if you watch that tongue of yours."

Thereupon Hugh gave Mr. Axtell some wholesome advice.

"From this time on I'm as mute as a Jersey clam," declared the old man. "I'm willing to do anything that promises to restore Nelly. Shall I go home?"

"No, not that," replied Hugh. "You may be needed here."

"Then I stay, but I'll play Sphinx the remainder of the game."

At which the boy detective was gratified.

"If it wasn't for raising the boarders, I'd give you a hornpipe!" he said, thinking of the flute in his pocket.

"Give me one anyhow, but play it low. It will remind me of Nelly."

Hugh took a seat on the edge of the bed and played as low as he could several tunes, which seemed to float a mist before Ahijah Axtell's eyes.

Having done this, he bade the old man good-night and went away.

As he skipped down the stairs leading into the office, he stopped suddenly and looked at a man who was bending over the Register.

While he looked, this person raised up, and Hugh saw his face.

It was Burt Denman, Joly Jenkins's friend and employer!

CHAPTER IV.

THE SPIDER AND HIS FLY.

HUGH instantly drew back, and falling into the shadows of the stairs, continued to watch the man below.

There could be no mistake.

He had seen Burt Denman at the Eureka Employment Bureau; and had not Joly Jenkins confessed that he was the real head of the concern?

The boy shadower continued to study the well-dressed young man in the office until the latter thanked the night clerk for his courtesy, and walked out.

Denman had hardly turned his back upon Hugh, than the boy came down the stairs two steps at a time, and glancing hastily at the clerk, quitted the hotel at the fellow's heels.

It was now midnight, but the hour did not dampen the boy's ardor.

"There's more than one finger in this pie," assumed Hugh. "What brought such a swell young man to a little one-horse hotel but some kind of rascality? Joly Jenkins and Burt Denman belong to the same rest, and have but few secrets not common property with themselves."

By this time Denman was walking off, enjoying a cigar which he had just started. He was elegantly dressed, as he always was, for the "Eureka" brought him considerable revenue, thanks to Joly's shrewd management. It enabled him to keep up a style which caused him to be envied by some who had a larger income, and those who did not know him thought him a rising young banker, or the only son of some city nabob.

If Burt Denman was anxious to reach any

certain place within a given time, he did not show it. He strolled leisurely along the almost deserted sidewalk, twirling his gold-headed cane and puffing at his fragrant cigar.

All at once, several squares from the hotel, he was joined by a man.

"Joly Jenkins!" exclaimed the shadower, who was near enough to see the shape of Denman's companion. "I'll bet he's forgot all about my last lesson. Ah! yonder 's as precious a pair of scamps as this city harbors! I'd like to know what they wouldn't do if it was to their interest."

The two men withdrew to a spot which the searching light of the nearest lamp did not reach and began to converse in low tones.

"They're comparing notes," decided Hugh, watching them. "Burt is telling Joly what he discovered at the hotel, and Joly is talking about something besides the affairs of the famous 'Eureka.'"

This was evident to the young detective from what he saw, and as he could not approach the two men without being discovered, he was compelled to watch them at an aggravating distance.

When the pair left the scene of the conference they were followed by Hugh to a house nearly twenty squares from the spot.

Burt Denman produced a night key and opened the door.

"This is a bit of luck that makes me smile," Hugh heard him say to his companion before parting with him for the night. "Does the old mope expect to pick up the trail after all this interval?"

"There's no telling what he expects to do," answered Joly.

"I'll see that he's employed," and Denman laughed. "He needn't be idle while he's in the city. I've got lots of time on my hands, and I'll begin to-morrow, or rather to-day, for it's morning now. But, good-night, major. I'll call at the office and report results."

Denman disappeared within and Joly Jenkins was walking away alone.

Hugh did not give Joly up until he had tracked him back to his lodgings over the Bureau, when, pretty well blown, he sought his own little room in the tenement and threw himself upon the cot to think, not to sleep.

The sun was up when the young detective came out of the short doze into which he had finally dropped. He sprung up and, taking his flute from its drawer, sat on the edge of the cot and sent out some merry bird-like notes.

"That's as good as a breakfast sometimes," he exclaimed, laying the instrument aside and, beginning his humble toilet. "I've got a business day before me, and it seems to me that I ought to know something before night. Joly will be at his post during business hours, so I'll not disturb him. Mr. Burt Denman is the gentleman who must receive my attention; so here goes for breakfast and then for the new trail."

It did not take Hugh long to satisfy his appetite. Some hot coffee and a plate of fish, flanked by a dish of fried potatoes, soon fitted him for the task ahead, and in a short time he was hurrying along the street.

His intention was to have another interview with Ahijah Axtell for he wanted to warn him to be on the lookout for Burt Denman and to this end he went toward the Jerseyman's hotel.

He was told there that the old gentleman had risen an hour before and had gone out for a walk.

"Which way did he go?"

As a matter of course the clerk did not know. Nonplused by this state of affairs, Hugh went back to the pavement and looked both ways.

In one direction lay a small park, and, guessing that it would attract the Jerseyman, he walked toward it with eyes on the lookout.

"Well, I'm beat!" cried the boy, halting suddenly. "The fly has already fallen into the clutches of the spider. I did not expect you to get ahead of me, Burt Denman, but, there you are, and I surrender!"

The scene which had caught the boy's eye was enough to halt him.

Just ahead, on one of the iron settees of the little park, sat two men—Ahijah Axtell and Burt Denman!

The spider and the fly.

The elegant Burt had come from his web as fresh as a daisy, and his oily tongue was moving with all the volubility he knew.

Hugh could see that the fellow was trying to captivate the old man and it was very plain, and painful as well, that he was succeeding.

At last Denman consulted his watch.

"By the way," Hugh heard him say, for he

now raised his voice, "you will breakfast with me, Mr. Axtell."

The Jerseyman—lost Nelly's grandfather—said he did not like to impose upon good nature when he had money himself; but Denman pressed the invitation and insisted so strongly that the old man yielded.

"Fairly caught! I give you credit for that, Burt," exclaimed the young spy. "If the web isn't broken and the fly freed, I'll quit the game."

The countryman and the city sharp crossed the park and Hugh followed them to a fashionable restaurant a square beyond.

He saw Denman conduct Ahijah down the long aisle and select a secluded table.

"Blessed by a tongue like that which Burt Denman carries in his head, Uncle 'Hijah will forget his promise to me, and Burt will know everything before they get to toothpicks," thought Hugh. "This is getting interesting. I half-believe the 'Jack Xerxes' letter was written for the purpose of decoying the old man into the clutches of the pair. If so, it was a clever bit of business."

Meantime Ahijah Axtell had ordered his breakfast, wholly discarding the bill of fare, and Burt was talking again.

"I have plenty of time on my hands," said he, "and I shall be pleased to devote much of it to your entertainment. I am astonished to learn that you have never been to the city before, and you live so close, too!"

"I've never had anything to bring me up," replied the Jerseyman. "An old fellow like myself—one set in the ways of country life—can't keep his end up in the city where sharps and sharks abound."

"Ha, ha! I'm sure you could!" laughed Burt Denman, giving his mustache a little twist. "If I were one of those fellows I'd know better than to tackle a gentleman of your intelligence. Do you expect to be our guest very long?"

"That depends," said Axtell, a bit of mystery in his tone.

"Oh, you're here on business?"

"Yes."

The reply seemed curt enough to abash any one, and Burt with all his sleek polish and audacity, was for a moment set back.

"I'm here on business of a personal nature," resumed the Jerseyman. "You will pardon me, Mr. Nicholas, if I cannot enlighten you as to its nature."

This was a momentary stunner for Burt. He almost fell back in his chair, and if the two breakfasts had not come to his relief at that moment, for once in his life he would have been at a loss for language.

"When I talk 'business' you won't!" he said to himself, glancing across the table at Axtell. "Has some one given you advice, or are you your own mentor? But, never mind! I'll draw you out of your shell before I'm through with you. Joly would grin if he knew this."

Ahijah Axtell began on his breakfast and led the conversation from the channel into which Burt Denman had attempted to tow it.

Burt grimly humored the old man.

"I'll catch you yet," chuckled the city sharp. "No man ever beats me at my own game. I know what brings you to New York; but I want to find out what your opinions are."

Nearly an hour later the two emerged from the restaurant.

The boy detective was still on guard.

"I don't think the gold-mine panned out very well for you, Mr. Denman," smiled Hugh, noticing the countenance the spider carried.

Just then Ahijah Axtell held out his hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Nicholas," he said. "I've got to go back. I hope to see you later, when I'll make it all right for that breakfast. Good-morning."

And the old Jerseyman was walking away before Denman could recover his breath.

Happy Hugh could have laughed outright over the sleek rascal's defeat, but he was too close to indulge in any boisterous hilarity.

Denman gazed after Ahijah Axtell and bit his lip.

"Better luck next time!" he cried. "By Jove! I believe I'll let Joly try his hand. I must tell him, anyhow." And off he stalked, alternately cursing and laughing at himself.

When Axtell had turned a corner Hugh ran forward and caught up with him.

"I guess you'll do," he exclaimed, touching the old man's sleeve. "From what I've seen, I think you've bluffed one of the biggest rascals in New York."

"Who—that Mr. Nicholas?"

"Burt Denman; but no matter what he calls himself. He's a blood-sucking spider all the same, and you must play Sphinx to him!"

CHAPTER V.

THE EUREKA'S TERRIBLE CUSTOMER.

"Ho, ho, ho! ha, ha, ha! I guess I have a right to laugh, though it's at my own expense."

"Well; have it out. I won't interrupt you."

These words were spoken in the private office attached to the Eureka Employment Bureau, and the hour was one not very remote from that which witnessed the scenes of the preceding chapter.

Mr. Burt Denman, after his tilt with Abijah Axtel, had sought out his friend, Joly Jenkins, and the two worthies were occupying luxurious chairs in the little nook aforesaid.

"I'm not much out, after all," continued Denman, when he had checked his somewhat boisterous merriment. "His breakfast knocked a dollar all to smithereens, but then it did me good to see him shut up like a clam the moment I came to business. Somebody has posted him."

"Since he landed in Gotham, think you, Burt?"

"It looks that way to me."

Joly was thoughtfully silent for a moment.

"Mebbe he's employed a detective, and has been 'posted' by him."

"I don't think he knows enough to employ a detective."

"Well, tell me all about your adventure, and then I may give an opinion."

Denman selected a cigar from the box on Joly's handsome desk, and between puffs of fragrant smoke retailed the incidents we have already described.

At the same time Nips, the flaxen-haired clerk attached to the establishment, was busy booking names and dispensing information in the outer office, and he was so far along in the intricacies of the business that Joly did not have to volunteer his assistance.

Mr. Jenkins listened attentively to everything Denman said.

Once or twice he pointed his mustache and frowned or approved, as the narrative seemed to demand, and for some time after the end of the story, he sat silent and studied the ceiling.

"Don't you think it's the old man?" asked Denman.

"There's not the least doubt of it, Burt," replied Joly. "Your description of him brings fresh to my mind a little incident which happened last night."

"Let's have it."

"After I had shut up I went round the corner to see the boy who has been giving me a few pointers on the flute. He had a visitor, as I discovered when I reached his door, and from what I saw of him—"

"The visitor, Joly?"

"The visitor. I say from what I saw of him, Burt, I believe he was old Axtell."

"With that boy?" cried Denman.

"With my tutor," answered Joly.

"That's odd. What do you think it means?"

Mr. Jenkins did not reply.

"What does the boy do besides play the flute?"

"I'll be hanged if I know. He's a daisy at that. He drops in here now and then during business hours, which seems to indicate that he's a young gentleman of leisure."

Burt Denman leaned forward, and his silken hand crept out like the head of a serpent, until one finger touched Joly's arm.

"Some of these gutter rats know a good deal," he said. "They are sharper than a tack."

"When will your boy tutor be here again?"

"Oh, I can get him at any time."

"Between now and noon?"

"I think so. I'll try right away."

Joly rapped on the desk with his knuckles, and Nips promptly responded.

"I want a note delivered," said Jenkins. "It isn't much of a job and you needn't be gone five minutes."

"I'm your man," grinned Nips, at the same time glancing at Denman and mentally valuing the diamond on his shirt-front.

Joly wheeled his chair to the desk and dashed off a note which he folded and placed in his clerk's hand.

"It goes to No. 963, S— street. The name is Hugh Hatton, third floor, to the left. But if he's in you'll hear a flute and you can't miss him."

Nips took the message and was off in a jiffy.

He had scarcely left the building when there came into the reception room of the Bureau a tall, broad-shouldered man who caught Joly's eye.

"A customer," whispered the manager to

Denman, and springing from his chair he hastened into the room to fill Nips's place.

The man had a coarse, unshaven face, his eyes were deep-buried and had a half-famished glare, and Joly felt glad that he had a counter between him and this customer.

"Is this the place where you get people work?" said the stranger in a rasping voice.

"This is the Eureka Employment Bu—"

"Give it to me by sections, boss," interrupted the man. "I can't grasp the whole outfit at one time."

Burt Denman, who could see Joly through the open door of the private office, smiled at his partner's expense.

"Yes," said Joly, somewhat nettled by what he had just listened to, "we find employment for people who are in need of it."

"A philanthropy, eh?"

The cadaverous speaker had reached the counter and was looking over it at Joly with the rolling eyes of a hyena.

"Bless me if he isn't a lunatic," thought Jenkins.

"What do you charge?" blurted the man.

Now was Joly's chance. Of course a person like the one at the counter was penniless.

"Our fee is ten dollars," said Jenkins.

"I'm no millionaire!"

"That's all right. We don't find employment for nabobs; but we can't help people to soft snaps for nothing."

The stranger shut his teeth with a snap.

"You're fat enough to eat," he said in tones that seemed to chill Joly's marrow. "I haven't had anything between my jaws since day before yesterday."

Joly believed this. He would not have said anything disrespectful of any statement the wild man might have made.

"Well, put me down on your books," continued the stranger. "I haven't got a dollar to my name, and I know you demand a fee in advance—"

"Not at all," urged Joly, anxious to get rid of his visitor at any price.

He opened a large book and dipped a pen into the inkstand.

"Your name?" he went on, glancing over the top of Nips's desk.

"Dan Sooeey."

Joly wrote the name upon the page before him.

"Profession?"

"I haven't any particular profession just now."

"What do you want to do?"

The eyes beyond the counter got a devilish twinkle.

"I want to commit murder!"

The pen almost dropped from Joly's hand.

"It's a fact. That's the sort of employment I'm looking for," resumed Sooeey. "Your sign says: 'Employment guaranteed to all.'"

"But we don't help people to violate the laws."

"No?"

"Of course not. If you want to commit murder, Mr. Sooeey, you'll have to do it without a boost from this Bureau."

The man growled.

He looked straight into Jenkins's eyes, and that worthy wished that Nips would come back, or that Denman would unbend enough to come to his rescue.

"I must help Joly out of his snap," decided Denman, at this juncture, and the next moment he stood in the doorway leading behind the counter where Joly was perched.

His footsteps evidently fell upon Dan Sooeey's ears, for he turned in an instant, and the next moment they stood face to face with the counter between them.

For an instant there was a nameless stare in Sooeey's eyes, and, all at once, with a yell that seemed to shake the solid building, he cleared the obstruction with a bound and fell upon Denman like a tiger.

"This is the man I want!" he cried, beating down the hands Denman threw up in self-protection. "He knows me 'way down in his heart. My name's not Dan Sooeey to him. He knows what it is!"

Joly was breathless and spell-bound. He saw the man force Denman back into the private office, where followed a desperate struggle, and when he found that he could move, he ran through the room into the street to hallow "Police! police!" at the top of his lungs.

As usual, not a blue-coat was within sound of his voice, and when he ventured into the building, he saw Sooeey lying face downward on the floor, while Denman, his fine clothes bloody and torn, looked like a person finished by a tiger.

It was too much for Joly, and with a short cry he reeled from the scene and fell in a faint at the foot of the counter, just as Nips made his appearance with Happy Hugh.

"Great Jericho!" cried Nips, with bulging eyes. "Just see what I escaped, boy. A cyclone of death has wound up the Eureka!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SURE CLEW.

Of course the swoop of the madman created the most intense excitement throughout the neighborhood.

The Eureka Employment Bureau was one of the institutions of the street, and the tragedy which had been enacted within its walls got together a tremendous crowd.

It was found upon examination that neither of the three participants in the affair was dead.

Mr. Burt Denman was somewhat bruised and pretty well choked; his fine coat was in ribbons, and the diamond pin was found in the hand of Sooeey, the would-be murderer.

The "Eureka's" customer was the nearest dead of the trio. The examining surgeon said that his rage had exhausted his vitality, and he was removed to the hospital with the chances for recovery decidedly against him.

As to Joly, he came out of his swoon and leaned back in his arm-chair with fright stamped in his countenance and nervous to a degree.

Denman, at his own request, was taken to his lodgings, but Jenkins remained at the Bureau.

Happy Hugh was not noticed until after the patrol wagon had taken Sooeey to the hospital, when, finding Joly the sole occupant of the snug little office, he slipped in and announced himself.

"Did you send for me, Mr. Jenkins?" asked the boy.

"Yes, but you'll have to come again. Mr. Denman wanted to see you. He had something to say—something important, I suppose; but this cyclone of murder—I call it that, though neither of us was killed—interfered with his arrangements. Drop around again this evening, and we'll call on Mr. Denman at his rooms—that is, if my nerves stand the strain they're undergoing just now."

"I think your nerves can stand anything, Joly," said Hugh, bowing himself out, and a moment later he was on the street once more.

There seemed to be something about the madman's assault which both Joly and Burt Denman were keeping back.

Hugh had noticed that while Jenkins told the story of the affray, he was watched like a hawk by his employer, and that before Denman went away the two had a private conference in the office.

Who was Dan Sooeey, anyhow?

Hugh's only sight of him was when he was carried to the patrol wagon, and then he saw a pair of glaring eyes, a wild and haggard face, and long skeleton hands which reminded him of claws.

He revolved these thoughts in his mind as he left the Bureau and was about to walk away when a dirty card lying at the edge of the pavement attracted his attention.

Going forward he picked it up and saw thereon an address in pencil.

It was evident, from its looks, that the card had been carried in a pocket for some time, but the young detective managed to read: "D. Sooeey, No. 99 P— street."

"Here may be a chance to find out something about the wild man," said Hugh. "I'll attend to it at once and then I'll look after Mr. Axtell and let him know how the elegant sharp had his clothes ruined."

99 P— street was not difficult to find, and not long after picking up the card, Happy Hugh was there.

He was met at the door by a tall woman who was about to slam the portal in his face when he spoke:

"Mr. Sooeey's in trouble," said Hugh.

"He is, eh?" exclaimed the woman. "I'm not at all surprised. The moment I saw him I knew he was a bad man, but he paid in advance and I was in debt, an'— But you know how it goes, boy? In trouble, is he? Tell me."

Hugh was shown into a small parlor at one side of the hall and Mrs. Van Meter, a professional boarding-house keeper listened to his story.

"What else would you expect of a man who writes nearly all his time and tears up everything he puts down?" she exclaimed.

"Does he do that?"

"Come up to his room and I'll show you."

The woman led the way up-stairs to a small

and poorly lighted back room. It looked more like the lair of a wild beast than the abode of a human being.

In the fire-place were many pieces of half-burned paper, and other bits were scattered over the floor.

"He's at it all the time he's in-doors," resumed the woman. "Writes and destroys, destroys and writes again. Dan Sooley, as he calls himself, was once a man of refinement. It crops out in many places. He acted the ruffian at the 'Eureka' as you call it, boy; but there was a time when he wasn't that."

"When was it, do you think?" asked Hugh, picking up several pieces of paper and looking at the words traced thereon.

"That I can't tell. I've heard him talk about Nelly."

Hugh started.

"About Nelly, eh?" he repeated.

"Yes. Sometimes he would throw down the pen and break out like a madman. I could hear him walking the floor, and every now and then the name of Nelly would reach my ears. He appeared to be looking for somebody—for somebody whom he did not regard in the light of a friend."

"An enemy, then?"

"It seemed so to me. Maybe he found that person at the employment agency."

The Musician Detective made no reply for a minute.

"I'd like to know more about Dan Sooley," he said, looking at the boarding-house keeper.

"You know as much as I do, boy."

The young shadower went over to the fire-place and picked up a handful of papers which had escaped the flame altogether.

"Sit down there and see what you can make out of them," said Mrs. Van Meter, pointing to the table. "You shall not be disturbed, for I'll be down-stairs attending to my duties."

Hugh was only too glad to accept this invitation.

He drew a chair up to the table and went to work.

"Of course the Nelly Dan Sooley talked about may not be the one I'm interested in," said Hugh. "Still, there can be no harm in putting these bits of writing together in hopes of getting at the bottom of this mystery. I never will believe that 'Hijah Axtell told me the whole story about his trouble, but I'll bring it out link by link. I've enlisted in this campaign for the war."

It took him a long time to put together enough pieces to form anything like a connected sentence. Many a person would have given up in despair; but Hugh did not think of such a thing.

At last he had before him the following words:

"I may never find Nelly, but I will find the infamous thief. And when I have found him—"

Here the sentence ended abruptly and Hugh was obliged to hunt for more.

"There seems to be two lost Nellys," he exclaimed. "Did Dan Sooley find the thief at the 'Eureka'? Or, did his diseased imagination mold Burt Denman, the spider, into that person? I would like to know. I shall know!"

Happy Hugh's pockets were filled with bits of paper when he went from Sooley's lodgings.

He went straight to Abijah Axtell's hotel and fortunately found the Jerseyman in.

"One question before I tell you what has happened since we parted," said the boy, laying his hand upon the old man's arm. "You always speak of Nelly as your granddaughter. What became of her father?"

Mr. Axtell fell back with a sudden gasp.

"My son?" he said with an effort, then paused and began again, "my son went away to hunt Nelly the day after her disappearance. He never came back, but two years after his departure he was found dead in the river that flows under the big bridge over yonder."

"Murdered?"

"No, he ended his life in despair. I have refrained from mentioning this sad event because it wrings my heart to think of it."

Hugh looked into the face of the honest old Jerseyman and saw his lips quiver.

"My son's name was found on the body," Axtell went on. "I was written to but not until after the corpse had been buried, and I let it remain where the city had put it. How came you to ask about Nelly's father?"

Hugh adroitly eluded the question, and it was not pressed. He then proceeded to tell the story of Dan Sooley's swoop upon the "Eureka" and left Axtell to draw from it any conclusions that seemed natural.

"I've found a clew!" said the boy sharp. "Now for the hospital."

A few moments later he had left the hotel and was on his way to the institution which had received Dan Sooley within its walls.

"How's the man what played tiger at the Eureka Employment Bureau this morning?" he asked of the first *attache* whom he encountered.

"He's dead!"

Hugh's anxious look became a stare.

"Dead?"

"That's what," answered the nurse.

"You ain't Nelly, I guess," continued the man with a grin.

Hugh, who was turning away, stopped and then came back.

"Of course I'm not Nelly," he said. "But what made you say that?"

"Why, just before the patient, Sooley, died he raised himself in bed and cried out that he hoped he had killed the man who stole his Nelly. It was the most exciting piece of acting I ever saw in the hospital and I've seen a good many. Of course it may have been the ravings of one in delirium; the doctors says it was."

"But it was nothing of the kind," said Happy Hugh to himself as he walked away. "That man wasn't Dan Sooley, but Nelly's father. He was Abijah Axtell's son, no matter what the old man thinks about the corpse found in the river. I'm now firmly on the trail, and I sha'n't quit it till I've found Nelly and brought to justice the two villains who are the meanest of their kind!"

CHAPTER VII.

PUMPING NIPS.

It was near the close of the day following Happy Hugh's visit to the hospital, and he was alone in his little room. He had coaxed several tunes from his flute, but had put the old friend away for the present, and was studying for the fortieth time the letter signed "Jack Xerxes" which he had received from Abijah Axtell, the Jerseyman.

"The madman, Nelly's father, is dead; the girl herself is still lost and Joly Jenkins wrote that letter!" said Hugh, unconsciously speaking aloud his conclusions. "To find Nelly, it seems to me, one has but to keep a sharp eye upon Joly. Mr. Burt Denman isn't well enough to resume the street, therefore I'll devote my time to the manager of the Eureka. Nips, the clerk, is one of those prying, inquiring persons who always know a good deal about their employers' private affairs, but the fellow seems a little distant. He evidently thinks himself above Happy Hugh, the boy ferret. Look out, Mr. Nips. You may change your mind one of these days."

"Hello, Happy!" said some one at this juncture. "Alone, eh?"

Already Hugh was looking up and had caught sight of the person who, if he had listened, might have heard something about himself—Nips, the clerk.

"Of course I'm alone, Nips," exclaimed Hugh with a laugh. "I never have visitors."

"Mebbe you should be deemed lucky for being so situated," and Nips walked in without an invitation. "I'm tired," he went on. "We had a hard day of it, and the entire work fell upon me. Mr. Denman, you see, is still confined to the house, and Mr. Jenkins is too nervous to do anything at the Bureau. I'm hunting recreation; shut up the Bureau somewhat earlier than usual for that purpose. Would you like a stroll?"

"This is luck," thought Happy Hugh. "Nips is unbending. Which way shall it be?"

He spoke the last sentence aloud.

"I was going down to my watchmaker's, near the Battery, and from there we might begin a lark of some kind, such as two gentlemen of our disposition ought to indulge in."

Hugh was very eager to embrace Nips's proposition, but took good care not to betray himself.

He told Nips that he had nothing pressing on hand just then, and a minute afterward the pair were on the street.

They went direct to the clerk's watchmaker. It was a very small room, and Hugh saw that if Mr. Nips did sometimes put on airs, he patronized some very humble shops.

"That little old man," said Nips to Hugh, when they had said "good-day" to the old watchmaker, "is one of the best jewelers alive. He was, for a time, Watchmaker Extraordinary to His Royal Highness Somebody across the water. I bring him all the work I can, and consequently get my jobs done at a discount. The other day Mr. Denman gave me a lady's watch to take to his jeweler, and what did I do

but fetch it down here to Old Gatchin, and get it repaired in a manner that delighted my employer!"

"That was pretty shrewd," smiled Hugh, looking up into his companion's beaming face. "But what was Mr. Denman doing with a lady's watch? I thought he—"

"Wasn't married, eh?" Nips interrupted.

"Yes; you took the very words out of my mouth."

"Well, my employer isn't married; but that don't prevent him from having a very pretty cousin who knows something about the flute."

The boy detective started.

"A girl play the flute?" he exclaimed, feigning astonishment.

"Why not? Girls learn everything, nowadays!" laughed Nips.

Hugh nodded.

"Is she pretty?" he asked.

"Who?"

"Why, Mr. Denman's cousin."

"I should say so."

"Then you've seen her, Nips?"

"Twice. But there's a certain sadness about her which I can't describe."

"A shadow of some sort?"

"I've always thought so. When I went to the house the first time—it was to summon Mr. Denman to the 'Eureka'—I heard a flute playing the saddest strain you ever listened to, and when the player met me in the hall, holding the flute in her hand, I nearly fainted. She moves often, that is I think she does, for the second time I saw her she was sitting at an open window in quite another part of the city, and though she disappeared the moment I caught sight of her, I knew she was the girl-flutist and Denman's cousin."

We need not say that Happy Hugh eagerly drank in every word of Nips's revelation. They had reached Battery Park by this time and, Nips having produced cigars, had taken possession of a settee. Hugh noticed that his companion wore a new suit which afforded a striking contrast to his poor garments, and the clerk suddenly noticing the mute inspection said:

"It's a pretty good fit, eh?"

Hugh looked half confused and replied:

"Rather good. You have a tailor as well as a watchmaker, Nips?"

"Every rising young man has," answered Nips proudly. "Gatchin is my watchmaker, and Spenloe, my tailor."

"And pray who is the pretty cousin's milliner?" grinned Hugh, anxious to bring Nips back to the subject nearest his heart.

"I never got so far along as that!" rejoined the clerk. "I'll tell you, though, that if Mr. Denman's cousin has a milliner, and all young misses of quality have, you know, she's up in her profession."

"Of course," assented the boy detective, having no doubts that Nips had seen lost Nelly Axtell. "I'd like to see Mr. Denman's cousin because I like pretty faces."

Nips reflected a moment, and having no watch just then, walked over to where an old man occupied a bench and got the time.

"We'll go up to where I saw her last," he said, coming back to Hugh.

"The young lady, you mean?"

"Certainly—Mr. Denman's cousin."

This was better luck than the boy ferret had dared to hope for, and leaving the park, they took the "L" and were soon being whirled up town.

"Are we going up among the nabobs?" asked Hugh.

"Not quite, boy," was the response. "We'll stop this side of upper-tendom; but the neighborhood inhabited by Mr. Denman's cousin is good—first-class."

They rode on until Nips nodded to Hugh and at the next station both got out.

"It's just around the corner, if I'm not mistaken," said Nips. "It's number 555."

Happy Hugh kept at the clerk's side, and as they turned into the next street Nips touched him saying in a whisper:

"By Jove! yonder's Mr. Jenkins!"

Hugh stopped, and then felt himself pulled into the shadow of a house by his companion.

"If they catch me playing spy the 'Eureka' will lose its clerk," continued Nips, pale at the gills. "But the man who has just rung yon bell is Joly or his ghost."

Hugh had already fixed his gaze upon the man so suddenly discovered by Nips, and knew that he had found Joly Jenkins in the flesh.

"Is that the house where you last saw Mr. Denman's cousin?" whispered the boy.

"That's the identical house," replied Nips.

The friends waited a moment longer, and

then, when Joly was about to jerk the bell-knob again, the door opened.

The manager of the "Eureka" seemed to look startled.

"Is Miss Bertha in?" Nips and Hugh heard him ask.

"You mean the young lady who was here," answered the woman in the door.

"I mean Miss Bertha."

"I'm sorry, but I cannot give you any information about her. You see I took this house but three days ago. Its former tenants had just vacated it—"

"Do you know where they went?"

"I do not."

Joly looked nonplused.

"Is that all?" asked the woman.

"I reckon it is," and the door slammed, and the manager of the "Eureka" came down the steps, disappointed and angry.

"I'll let him know that he can't win alone!" cried Joly, halting in front of the house. "Here's a pretty go. He's at his cute tricks, and wants to monopolize everything. It was to have been share and share alike, and, by Jupiter! he can't afford to set up a game against me!"

At the conclusion of his speech, Joly started off, fortunately not coming toward Nips and Hugh, and when he had vanished, Nips said:

"We're too late. The nest has new and strange birds. Joly is feeling hurt. He calls to see the pretty flute-playing cousin, and she has moved. He seems to think that some one has put up a game on him. I'm afraid Joly's jealous." And Nips laughed.

By this time the manager of the "Eureka" was more than a square away, and in another street, and Happy Hugh proposed a moving on.

"Hits me exactly!" exclaimed Nips.

They left the shadow of the wall and walked toward the house Joly had just quitted.

Hugh glanced up at the door when they got opposite.

He saw the number—555.

While he looked the curtains at one of the windows parted, and the next instant he saw there, with her face framed in lace, a young girl whose appearance thrilled him.

Was it Nelly?

It happened that Nips, looking away at the time, saw nothing of this, and before he could see it the curtain came together and the face was gone.

"A thousand to one that I've found Nelly Axtell," said Happy Hugh to himself. "This is good luck with a vengeance. I'll be back here just as soon as I can 'throw' Nips. I see that it is diamond cut diamond, and all in the family, too. I'm getting there, ha, ha!" And while he laughed, Hugh did not see the shadow which even then was at his heels, nor dream of the great danger so near at hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOLY JENKINS'S BLUNDER.

LEAVING Happy Hugh to his self-imposed task of getting rid of Nips, who liked company just enough to give the young detective a world of trouble, let us go back and look after Joly Jenkins whom we left walking rapidly from the scene of his disappointment.

Joly did a good deal of talking to himself, nor grew still for a single moment until he plunged suddenly into an open doorway and running upstairs greeted a man who occupied a dingy law-office with spider-webs across the upper panes.

The old tin sign on the outside of the door informed the public that "Noah Natchett, Attorney and Counselor at Law," occupied the dirty quarters, a fact well known to Mr. Jenkins of the "Eureka."

The lawyer was small, dried-up, spectacled and sharp of feature. He wore a wig which sometimes came off with his hat, and the few buttons he boasted of were not on his glossy coat.

Despite his appearance, Mr. Natchett was shrewd, and, withal, unscrupulous. He was hated by his legal brethren who knew that those who wanted certain kinds of advice went to him and got it for less money.

The old lawyer's eyes fell upon Joly with an evil and avaricious gleam.

"You haven't been here for some time, Mr. Jenkins," said Natchett. "I see by the papers that you had an affair at the 'Eureka.' By the way, how is Mr. Denman?"

Joly said growlingly that Denman was "coming round all right."

"Glad to hear it," answered the weazen-faced sharp. "Friend and employer of yours, you know."

Joly bowed stiffly.

"Look here, Mr. Natchett," he said. "I want to know if those foreign fortunes ever pan out to amount to anything."

"What, have you your eye on one?" and the lawyer grinned until Joly saw his little false teeth.

"Yes—no," was the reply. "Still, I'd like to have an opinion."

Natchett fell back in his chair, as was his habit just before delivering an opinion, and for a moment blinking at the ceiling like an owl facing the sun.

"I've known 'em to pan out well," he said, slowly looking at Joly. "What country?"

"Say England."

"Fortunes come from there sometimes."

"How about Scotland?"

"I'd rather risk one from there."

There was some Scottish blood in Noah Natchett's veins, and Joly feared that this fact might have biased his opinion.

"What part o' Scotland?" queried Mr. Natchett, after a short silence.

"Say from near Dumfries."

The next instant the old lawyer, instead of blinking at the ceiling, was looking straight into Joly's face.

"Mr. Jenkins, do you intend to employ me?" he asked.

"To do what?"

"To get your fortune for you."

Joly Jenkins laughed.

"By Jovel that's good!" he cried. "Think of the manager of the Eureka falling heir to a lump of Scottish gold! I wish there was a chance!"

"Then, you're not the person?"

"No."

"But you take an interest in the matter?"

Joly suddenly bent over the table.

"Who occupies the next room?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Kent and Kineon; but they're not in now," answered Natchett. "The room overhead is empty; the one below us belongs to a man just now out of town, and the basement—"

"Hang the basement!" broke in Joly. "Now, I'll show you something."

He unbuttoned his waistcoat and drew forth a long and well-worn envelope, from which he proceeded to extract a paper, Noah Natchett's deep-set black eyes glittering the while.

Joly shoved the paper across the table, the lawyer pounced upon it like a vulture, opened it, read a minute and then looked up, his face, yellow when he began, now ghastly.

"Is this yours?" he cried to Joly.

"Yes, sir."

"How long have you had it?"

"Some years. You know what it is?"

"I do. I wrote it myself."

"You?"

"Yes. I was parish clerk then."

Mr. Joly Jenkins opened his eyes with amazement.

"It was a rainy day, and the light in my little room was so dim that I could not go straight all the time. Here's where I made a blot," the old man touched the paper with the tip of one of his mummy-like fingers. "Yes, sir, that's the identical leaf from the Register."

The paper before him seemed to transport him back to old times and other scenes.

"I wasn't 'Old Noah Natchett' then," he went on. "I had not begun to help one portion of mankind prey upon the other. I was a parish clerk, nothing more, but, by heavens! I was happy. But you don't want me to tell you this, Mr. Jenkins?"

"No. I wanted to know whether you considered that writing genuine—"

"I do."

"Certainly, since you wrote it yourself. Now, supposing a large fortune depended upon your swearing to the genuineness of the document before you—"

"Would I swear to it, eh?" again broke in Natchett. "No, I would not!"

Joly looked thunderstruck.

"Why wouldn't I?" cried Old Natchett. "In the first place, I'm a serpent that has shed his skin. Does the snake ever go back and resume the skin cast off? No. For me to swear to that paper makes me parish clerk again. See? Secondly, I won't dip my hands into any rascality directed against the acquaintances or friends of my young manhood."

Joly thought he should fall from his chair.

The idea of Noel Natchett, regarded as one of the unscrupulous law-vultures of Gotham, talking about honesty, was something worth wondering at.

Old Noah seemed to read his client's thoughts.

"I'm called unscrupulous and heartless," he went on. "I'm the shark of the bar, the vulture lawyer of New York, and maybe I haven't given the right advice all my life; but here's a case I won't touch unless it be in the interests of justice. This page is from the register of Prenlow Parish, Dumfries, Scotland. It records that on a certain day many years ago, Mortimer Axtell married Jeannie McDonald, as fine a pair as ever stood before the minister. Afterward they left Scotland—the young man quarreled with his people, refused to take a farthing of the family estate, and so forth. Years rolled on. The old father changed his will. He cut his son off altogether, but said that his daughter—word had come back from somewhere that Mortimer was the father of a little girl—should be the heiress of the Axtell wealth. I don't know what became of Mortimer Axtell; he never came back. Probably he died long ago."

"He did and his wife, too," said Joly.

"Ha, you know, do you?" cried Natchett.

"Go on," was Joly's answer. "You interest me."

Still holding the yellowish paper in his hand, the old law shark continued:

"It's a big estate now—worth many thousands. There was a clause in the will which provided that should Mortimer Axtell's daughter marry and have a daughter, the mother dying before the estate was claimed, the daughter was to inherit. Now, there must be a legal heir somewhere."

"What makes you think so?" asked Joly.

"A line of good Scotch blood seldom runs out," answered the old lawyer. "Besides this, if there was thought to be no legal heir living, you, Mr. Jenkins, would not be here asking my opinion of that paper."

"It looks that way to you," said Joly.

"It is that way!" was the prompt response.

The manager of the "Eureka" reached out for the document, but it was quickly withdrawn.

"Not yet," said Natchett. "I'll tell you something else. This leaf was cut from the register of Prenlow Church some years ago. The theft occasioned a good deal of excitement at the time. About the same time certain other events of a dark nature took place on this side of the water. I recall now a newspaper paragraph which, if you had not called, I should not in all probability, ever have thought of again. I received a letter—Heaven knows how the writer thereof knew that I was once a parish clerk—asking me to look out for a young girl who had left her home in New Jersey. In the letter was the newspaper clipping I have mentioned. But there was no fee in the letter; I was busy, and it was tossed aside. I say my mind goes back with great clearness to these events just now. I'm more than you thought me, eh, Mr. Jenkins?"

It was a laugh that seemed to rasp Joly's bones like a cold file.

"You'd better leave this with me," continued Noah, glancing at the paper in his hand.

"That paper? I can't! I can't say that it belongs to me."

"Not to you? To whom, then?"

Joly said nothing.

"Don't you know it's compromising to have stolen property in your possession?"

"I know it's not exactly right before the law—"

"See here!"

Old Noah was leaning over the table toward Joly.

"Go back to your business," he said. "I'll keep the paper for the time being. It will be safe with me. It proves a point in law, and I'm the living witness. Some day the heiress of the Axtell thousands will turn up. She's bound to do so. You can't afford to have a paper like this in your care. Why, man, they'd send you to prison on sight. You say it isn't your property? Who claims a right to it?"

Joly's eyes flashed while his face flushed.

"You can't hold that document!" he cried, rising and pushing his chair back with a kick. "I didn't come here to give it to you, nor to let you score an unexpected victory. Give it to me!"

Joly looked across the table into the dancing eyes of the little old lawyer.

"Not yet, Mr. Jenkins. If the paper ain't yours, as you have just admitted, what right have you to it?"

"That's for me to keep to myself."

The next moment Joly came round the table, his hands clinched and his eyes on fire; but all at once one of Noah Natchett's bunch of fingers came up over the top and the manager of the Eureka looked into a cocked revolver!

"If you don't get out I'll kill you in your tracks!" said the old man.
Joly threw a curse into the face of the lawyer and said to himself as he went down the stairs:
"The boss blunder of my life!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE POWER OF MUSIC.

EAGER to know whether he had really seen Nelly Axtell at the window of No. 555, Happy Hugh hurried back to the neighborhood the moment he "shook" Nips.

It was now dark and the lamps had been lighted.

Hugh had made Nips believe that he was needed at home to give a lesson on the flute to a scholar, and the genial and very communicative clerk had let him go with great reluctance.

Happy Hugh found it very quiet about the place when he got there.

He believed that he had seen the lost Jersey girl and hoped to have a good report for "Uncle 'Hijah" the next time he met the old gentleman.

He wondered why, if Joly was in the original plot with Burt Denman, the landlady of No. 555 had told him that Nelly did not occupy any part of the house. Could it be that Denman was jealous of Joly?—that he was playing a game of his own?—that he had instructed the woman as to how she should meet and answer Joly?

Hugh recalled Joly's angry countenance when he came down the steps, baffled and unsuccessful. Something had come between the plotters. There was war within the Eureka Employment Bureau, and the boy detective saw that it might turn out to his advantage.

He rung the bell with unfeigned eagerness, and waited for a response.

It came at last in the sounds of tripping footsteps, and the next moment Hugh stood face to face with the girl he had seen at the window.

Was it Nelly?

"What is it, please?" asked the beautiful portress.

Hugh seemed to have lost his tongue.

"I would like to see you alone for a moment," he said, at last.

"See me alone?" smiled the girl. "Is it very important?"

"It is."

"Then come in," and the door opened wider. "You shall see me as you desire, though I cannot think what your business can be."

The young sharp was conducted to a parlor alongside the hall. It was quite dark, for the gas was not turned on, but the young girl soon put an end to the shadows.

"I will come to my business direct," began Hugh, after studying for a full minute the face before him. "Are you Nelly Axtell?"

The girl started as if the boy had suddenly touched the bounds of a secret, but the next second she was laughing.

"My name is Nelly, but not Nelly Axtell," she said.

Hugh thought he detected a desire to hide something.

"Are you sure?" he queried. "This is very important; not to me perhaps, but to the person who is the real Nelly Axtell, grandchild of Ahijah Axtell of New Jersey."

"Are you searching for her?"

"I am."

"And you thought—"

The young speaker paused, as if to choose her words.

"To be plain, I thought I might find her in this house," said Hugh.

"I guess not," laughed the girl once more.

"Why do you want to find her? Is she your sister?"

"She is no relation to me."

"You are employed, then?"

"I have promised to find Nelly Axtell if possible."

Just then Hugh's eye chanced to fall upon the end of a flute as it extended over the edge of the mantel.

"I beg your pardon, miss," said he, rising and going forward. "From what I see on your mantel our tastes are the same."

He did not see how intently the girl was watching him. Her eyes followed him with almost breathless curiosity, and when he took down the flute and put it to his lips she seemed to have been transformed into a statue of marble.

"What shall I give you?" asked Hugh, looking over the instrument.

The only answer he received was a strange stare. The girl no longer stood, but had seated

herself and was still watching him like one fascinated, or bound by a spell of some kind.

The boy detective sent forth a few wayward notes and all at once began to play a lively hornpipe—one which 'Hijah Axtell had told him was one of Nelly's favorite pieces. He saw her eyes follow his moving fingers; he noticed that her breath went in gasps, and that her feet kept merry time on the carpet.

Ending the hornpipe suddenly, Hugh continued with "Home, Sweet Home" and never before had the old favorite been so exquisitely rendered on the flute.

In a moment the bright face of the single auditor became sad. The eyes seemed to grow moist as the tune proceeded, and Hugh, watching her all the time, thought again that the flute had fixed her identity.

"Do you play?" asked the young ferret, handing her the flute. "People who don't use the flute seldom have it in the house."

She reached out one of her white hands and took the instrument.

A strong desire to carry it to her lips seemed to take sudden possession of her, but she curbed it.

"I—seldom—play—nowadays," she said.

"Then you know how?" eagerly exclaimed Hugh.

"I used to know."

"I should like to hear you."

The speaker's voice was a pleading one.

The following moment the flute was at the girl's lips, but before she could sound a single note the door suddenly opened and a woman, who seemed half-tigress to Happy Hugh, half-bounded, half-glided into the room.

Her eyes were full of madness and were fastened upon the girl who, seeing her, dropped the flute at her side and turned white.

"You must not play too much. Such are the orders, you know," she said sternly, snatching the flute from the girl's hand, and then she turned and glared at Hugh.

"Who are you?" she cried, looking as though she might leap upon him without warning. "You have no right here. The young lady is not in good health, and your presence irritates her."

"She hasn't played a note," said Hugh. "I am the guilty party."

"But you have coaxed her into playing, and she plays too much as it is. You know where the door is, young man!"

Hugh felt like resenting such words. He felt his blood run to his finger-tips and tingle there; but he knew that the creature before him had the strength of a lioness coupled with the agility of a cat.

"Ain't you going?" continued the woman, stepping forward. "When you're wanted here you'll be sent for."

Happy Hugh looked at the girl on the sofa. She had fallen back and sat there shivering as he could see, with her face buried in her hands.

"Whether she be Nelly Axtell or no, she is a prisoner in this house!" flashed through his mind. "I'll go, but I can't forget this. No. 555 will hear from me again. If I haven't found the Scotch heiress, I've got a job for the police."

He looked once more at the girl, and then told the woman that he would go.

"That's sensible!" exclaimed the Amazon. "A quick departure insures the safety of your bones."

"I believe it," mentally exclaimed Hugh.

A moment later he was in the doorway and the woman had placed herself between him and the occupant of the sofa.

"Let me play one tune for him!" cried Nelly, springing up and making a grab for the flute in the woman's hand. "He played so sweetly for me. Let me play just one tune!"

The dark look she got from the woman was enough to send her staggering toward the sofa. The flute was jerked from the fingers which had closed upon it, and the next instant the girl fell back with a wailing cry.

Hugh would have gone to her rescue if the woman had not wheeled upon him at that moment and stepped forward with her big hands clinched.

"Go! If you stay another moment I'll throw you into the street!"

The boy detective fell back.

"I can do it!" continued the woman. "I can break every bone in your body, and it ought to be done!"

She advanced until she stood in the dim hall, towering above Happy Hugh like a steeple; and he was looking up into her face, expecting every moment to see her attempt to carry out her threat.

"Don't come back!" cried the woman as Hugh opened the door. "The next time you won't get off so easy. I'm always on guard, and you never catch me napping."

Hugh waited to hear no more, but sprang from the house and heard the door shut and bolted behind him.

"The den of a tigress with a lamb in her claws!" exclaimed the boy sharp. "There is something strange about this adventure. The girl admits that her name is Nelly; she knows how to play the flute; she is watched day and night for some reason. She knows that she is a prisoner; she would escape, but cannot! If not Nelly Axtell, why did Joly Jenkins visit the house and get told that 'Nelly' wasn't there? I believe—I am sure of it and nothing can change me—that I have found Nelly Axtell. But I won't attempt anything more to-night. Tomorrow shall be my day, and the tigress back yonder shall discover that she hasn't seen the last of Happy Hugh. I'll now run over and see Uncle 'Hijah' at his hotel. I won't tell him what I've discovered; but I'll kind o' prepare him for good news."

Hugh carried out his intentions. He found the old man at the little hotel, and at the end of the interview Hugh went home, played several tunes on the flute and sought his cot.

The next forenoon, with the warm sun in his face, he went back to No. 555, and to his astonishment found hanging alongside the door a sign which had a startling significance in his mind.

"The birds are gone," said Hugh to himself. "The words 'For rent' tell the story."

CHAPTER X.

BURT DENMAN TURNS HUNTER.

THERE was an air of desertion about the house. The shutters were closed, and confirmed in their silent way the legend on the board that hung alongside the door.

"I am now sure that I have seen Nelly Axtell," murmured Happy Hugh. "The trail has disappeared—the bird flown, and I have that rent board for my pains."

He looked a while longer, and then started off with a laugh.

"If they expect to baffle me by a play of this kind they will find themselves mistaken," he exclaimed. "I've enlisted for the whole campaign, no matter how long it lasts. Perhaps I ought to ask Phelan what he would do under the circumstances, but I won't. This is my case, and I propose to work it up myself."

Hugh went over to that part of the city which contained the Eureka Employment Bureau.

As he drew near to the establishment, which had gained new notoriety within the last few hours on account of Dan Sooley's assault, he saw Burt Denman step forth.

"Out again, is he?" exclaimed the boy detective. "He couldn't have been so terribly injured after all."

Denman looked pale and ill at ease.

"What sort of a chase are you going to lead me?" continued Hugh, watching the well-dressed fellow, who seemed at a loss which way to go. "If you know anything about Nelly's flight, you'll be apt to give me a clew to her present whereabouts; and if you don't know anything, why, I'll have to dog you till you do."

If Hugh could have reached the neighborhood a little sooner—if he could have looked into the private office of the "Eureka"—he might have seen Denman open and read a letter which the first carrier had brought.

"MR. DENMAN," he read. "A boy has forced his way into the house and has succeeded in prying into our private affairs. He came for no good purpose, and when you read this the nest will be empty. The boy can play the flute in a marvelous manner; he got the girl excited over his tunes, and she would have played for him if I had not interfered. I don't know his name, but I know that the young rascal needs watching, for from what I've seen of him, he is dangerous. You will find my new address on a separate slip, and you may rest assured that she is with me. Yours for the cause. Mrs. T."

Denman's eyes had a mad flash when he got to the end of this letter.

"A boy who knows how to play the flute, eh?" he cried. "I don't think I'll have any trouble locating him. I have him spotted already, and I guess I'm able to take care of him. Nips?"

At sound of his name, the clerk of the "Eureka" made his appearance and waited for orders.

"What keeps Joly this morning?" asked Denman.

"Don't know, sir," answered Nips, whose looks showed that after separating from Happy Hugh he had had what is generally known as "a good time."

"Nips, do you know where his tutor lives?"
"The boy what gives Joly lessons on the flute?"

"Yes."
"Just around the corner, No. 963, third floor."

"Thanks," smiled Denman, proceeding to light a cigar. "Nips, you're a lucky dog."

"I think as much myself. I just missed that human cyclone."

"Well, he'll never come again," said Denman.

"Not if he's dead as reported."

"Oh, he's dead enough," was the reply.

"He must have mistaken you for some one else, sir," ventured Nips.

"I can't think otherwise; but these crazy people take strange notions."

"Then, he was really crazy?"

"What else?" cried Denman. "Do you think a sane man would act in that manner?"

"It's not likely that one would. And to think that he should fix upon the 'Eureka' for his scoop! Why, he passed a dozen houses on his way here. It's unaccountable, Mr. Denman."

The proprietor of the "Eureka" smiled and said nothing.

Unaccountable? No, to him it was the most natural thing in the world.

He knew why Dan Sooley had selected the "Eureka" as the scene of his awful attempt to take life; but he did not think it necessary to enlighten Nips.

He waited awhile longer for Joly's return to the Bureau, but as that individual did not come, he went to the door, to be spied by Happy Hugh as we have seen.

In a short time he moved away, and found numerous people looking at him and wondering perhaps at his speedy recovery.

He went down the street to the first corner, from which he looked closely at the buildings, and Hugh, who was not far behind, saw him halt in front of his own lodgings.

"Wants to see me, eh?" murmured the young detective. "I don't know whether I want an introduction just yet, or not. We're liable to meet some time, but the present don't seem the proper moment for the encounter."

By this time Denman had entered the lofty tenement, and Hugh heard him talking to a woman in the main hall.

"Mother Salmon don't know where I am, consequently Mr. Denman can't get much information," said Hugh to himself, while he waited for Burt's reappearance. "Ah! here he comes, with no triumph in his countenance!"

The boy ferret followed Denman to his lodgings, where, after an hour's waiting, he left him and went direct to Ahijah Axtell's hotel.

"A little too late," said the clerk on duty, recognizing Hugh by a previous encounter. "The old gentleman has paid his bill and left."

Hugh was thunderstruck.

"When did he do this?"

"An hour ago."

"Did he go home?"

"Really, I can't say."

"Wasn't it an unexpected move?"

"I think it was. He had been sitting in the office some time when a young man came in and accosted him. The old gentleman seemed startled, looked dazed-like."

"By the young man's coming?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"Axtell, eh?"

"Yes, Axtell."

"He looked at the young fellow for a moment and said: 'I have no news for you. She is lost still.' And then he got up and walked away. He was watched by the young man a few moments, and when he found that his unexpected visitor had gone away he paid his bill and departed."

Hugh was silent for a moment.

"Didn't the whole thing strike you as being very strange?" he asked the clerk.

"I never saw anything exactly like it."

"Was the young fellow a sharper?"

"Not at all. I have a slight acquaintance with him."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hugh, surprised.

"His name is Somers—Perry Somers, and he is a young bookkeeper on Barclay street. He came from Jersey some years ago, and before he went off, and while old Mr. Axtell was out of hearing, told me that he knew our guest when he was seeing better days."

"Perry Somers said that, did he?" asked Hugh, eagerly.

"He did."

"What is his number?"

The clerk wrote the young man's address on

a blank card and received the boy detective's thanks for his information.

"I want to see this Perry Somers," he said, leaving the hotel. "Hijah Axtell would not have left the hotel if the young man hadn't come. In some way Somers is connected with the story of Nelly Axtell and I want all the information to be picked up."

Happy Hugh went straight to Barclay street, and entering the house bearing the number furnished by the hotel clerk, inquired for Mr. Perry Somers.

He was shown to the little bookkeeper's den attached to the house, and there, standing at a desk with ink on his fingers and a ledger before him, was a good-looking young man of twenty-two.

The moment he turned to meet him Hugh liked Perry Somers. He had a fine open face, deep blue eyes and a taking appearance.

It happened that Somers was alone when Hugh called, and laying aside his pen he told the boy that he was at his service.

"Mr. Somers, aren't you just a little bit interested in the whereabouts of a certain young lady?" queried the young detective.

The bookkeeper started and stared at Hugh.

"I am," he said, frankly. "You knew this before you came here and that is why I find you in my office. I am interested in the whereabouts of Nelly Axtell who disappeared about five years ago. I was a Jersey boy then, and Nelly and I were close friends. There's no telling what might have happened if the villainous plot had not been hatched."

"Oh, you think it was a plot, do you?"

"There's no question about it," answered Somers, promptly, and with decision. "They can't make me believe that Nelly went away of her own accord. That wasn't her nature. She was abducted for a purpose, and the so-called Axtell fortune was the prize played for. But who are you, and what do you know? I have seen Nelly's grandfather within the last few hours, and was bluffed. Somehow or other the old gentleman never took kindly to me; but Nelly did, I think."

Somers smiled, and after a pause went on:

"Of course I'm interested in 'a certain young lady,' for Nelly is a child no longer. I'm willing to spend my last dollar to find her. Show me a trail and I don't touch another ledger-page."

"Then you can drop your pen, Mr. Somers," said Hugh, "for I think I can do that."

"You?" cried the young bookkeeper. "I thank Heaven that we have met. We'll win or fail together, my boy."

CHAPTER XI.

IN DENMAN'S GRIP.

THAT night, having made a confidant of young Somers, who had turned out to be a friend of Nelly Axtell's, if not her lover, Happy Hugh, in passing the Eureka Employment Bureau, saw a light in the window of the private office.

He was inclined to believe that Nips held possession of the place, and was engaged in posting the books after a busy day; but he soon discovered that, instead of the young clerk, Joly Jenkins, manager of the concern, was the tenant of the room.

The building stood in part along a narrow alley, and on the alley side was a window, provided with a shutter much the worse for wear. Hugh crept up to this window, and, thanks to a missing slat and a curtain not very well pulled down, saw Mr. Jenkins looking over some papers at the desk, while the door of the iron safe stood wide open.

Having reasons for thinking that his pupil was as deep into the conspiracy as Burt Denman, Hugh, with his eye glued to the shutter, as it were, watched Joly like a hawk.

He saw how carefully Joly examined the documents, stopping now and then to make notes in a memorandum at his elbow; how when he had gone through a certain paper he put it back in the safe, to take out another and subject it to the same inspection.

"He's not at honest work, that's certain," murmured the boy detective. "Joly is up to something. He didn't like it when he was told that 'Nelly' wasn't at Number 555, which was a falsehood, for she was there at the time. He evidently thought somebody was lying to him, and he growled when he came down the steps like a person who intends to get even. Now, the chances are that those are not your papers, Mr. Jenkins. If they were you wouldn't be making notes of their contents. One generally knows one's property. Ah, you're a sly dog, Joly. You had a motive for learning to flute,

and there's a pretty face at the bottom of the scheme."

Hugh continued to watch the man until the lost memoranda had been made. Then Joly glanced at his notes, nodded his head and smiled approvingly.

He was about to close the safe when the door leading into the business office of the concern opened, and the manager looking up fell back with a cry from the person who came in.

"Now for a scene!" thought Hugh, for Burt Denman had stolen upon his manager, and Joly was showing by his countenance that he had been caught in the act.

"Found at last!" the boy ferret heard Denman say in answer to Joly's stare. "I've been looking for you this hour, but not here, of course."

"Of course not," stammered Jenkins, attempting a smile. "If you had come here direct you'd have saved sole leather."

"That's a fact, but the loss isn't appreciable," was the retort. "Business has been good today, Nips says."

"A big day."

Denman, whistling a lively tune, approached the safe, but did not seem surprised to find it open.

He sent a swift, sly look at Joly and then stooped in front of the steel door.

Taking a key from his pocket, he opened a small door within the safe and took from it a packet containing some of the very papers from which Joly had just made some notes.

Joly grew pale about the gills as he watched Denman run over the papers with his silken fingers.

Suddenly the proprietor of the "Eureka" stopped as if he had missed something, then he went back, only to stop again at the same place. Joly was eying him like a lynx.

At last Denman quietly placed the packet upon the table at his left hand, and turned on his manager.

"You will oblige me by telling me what has become of the missing document," Hugh heard him say to Joly.

"What paper?" Mr. Jenkins said with all the calmness he could assume.

"Must I tell you what you already know? Why, the leaf from the register, of course!"

Joly sat still with upturned face.

"Do you accuse me, sir?" he said at last with an effort.

A smile appeared at Denman's mouth. He seemed to lean toward Joly as he replied.

"You knew it was here!" he said. "You knew where to put your hand upon it. The paper is missing, I say. It was not your property; it was held in partnership and you had no right to remove it without my consent. I'll take it if you please."

Jenkins appeared to sink into the back of the office chair.

He could not restore a document which he had been forced to leave with Noah Natchett, the vulture lawyer of New York. This was one of the impossibilities of the hour, and Joly could hardly keep back a smile when he thought how coolly the old lawyer had robbed him.

Meantime Denman was holding out his hand for the missing paper while he looked him sternly in the eye.

"I'm not joking," said the scheming sport. "If you think I'm in fun the sooner you disabuse your mind of that idea the better. You've been playing a little game of your own for some time and I want it stopped."

"What have I done?"

"In the first place, you've broken a part of our agreement," continued Denman. "You were not to visit our charge without my knowledge, and you've broken that promise. You have been taking lessons on the flute for a purpose easily understood. Finally, you have watched me at night."

"I?" exclaimed Joly.

"You!" answered Denman. "I made you manager of a money-making concern. I have taken your books for honest statements and without questioning them. You've had plenty of money. You have lost a good deal on the races, more than your salary; but I don't complain. Now, I want that missing paper. Don't look at me and say that some one else took it. Don't throw the theft on Nips, because it is worth nothing to him. He wouldn't know what it meant if he read it. I can't just fathom your intention in taking it; but I'm as sure you did as though I stood by and saw you do it."

By this time Joly was writhing and twisting in the arm-chair, as though electric needles were pricking him and he unable to get up.

"You're as deep in the mud as I am in the mire!" he said at last.

"What of that?" laughed Denman.

"You planned the scheme; you crossed the water—"

"And left you to commit murder at home, eh?"

Joly who had flushed while speaking, got white again.

"Who's deepest in the mud?" continued Denman. "You went to the house last night; but you didn't see Nelly."

"She was there, though!" blurted Joly.

"That woman lied to me!"

"Nelly was in the house all the time, but the nest is empty now."

"The bird's flown, eh?"

Mr. Joly Jenkins was seen to bite his lips.

"Now, look here," Denman's voice was stern again. "You're just mean enough to betray the whole scheme because you've grown tired of waiting for the stakes. I'm willing you should retire. Give me the missing paper and get out of the game. I'm disgusted! Ever since you've been at the head of the 'Eureka,' I've been systematically robbed; but I've borne with you because of our business relations in the past. You can't make the girl your wife. I have a say as to whom she shall marry and when. Do you know who died at the hospital of rage and exhaustion?"

"Of course I do," said Joly. "And, what is more, the moment you saw the man who called himself Dan Sooley you knew him."

Denman said nothing, but smiled.

"And you knew that you made a mistake," he replied at last.

"I made it at your suggestion if I did," retorted Joly.

"Ho, ho! I'd like to see you make the courts believe that," laughed Burt Denman. "My dear Joly, I don't intend to depose you as manager of the 'Eureka.' You may remain here and filch a little now and then as you have been doing; but I want two things done. I want you to leave off playing for Nelly, and I want that missing paper—the page from the register—produced right away."

"You ask for the impossible," said Joly, with an effort. "I can't turn it over."

"You mean you will not? Come, don't be stubborn."

"I mean what I say—I can't."

"Has it passed out of your hands?"

There was no reply.

Denman drew back, and for a full minute looked at Joly without speaking.

"You must produce it!" he said at last. "I will give you twelve hours of grace. Your words acknowledge the theft. You are playing a game of your own, but it won't win. Another step in the direction you are going, and I will see that somebody's mistake is paid for. You mean, miserable wretch, you are willing to ruin the best friend you ever had. I lifted you from the gutter. I've let you fleece me without a word. I can speak and send you to the gallows; you know it. At the end of the game I will make you so rich that you won't have to rob anybody to keep your hands greased with gold. Get me that paper—within twelve hours. I won't ask you where it is. You'd probably lie to me if I did. All I have to say is: Get it or suffer the consequences."

When Denman ceased Joly looked like a corpse in his chair.

At last he pulled himself together and got up on his feet.

"Will you get it?" asked Denman.

"I will," said the white-faced man in a whisper.

The next moment Joly tottered toward the door and Denman stopped in front of the open safe.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Happy Hugh at the window. "I wish Somers could have witnessed that interview."

CHAPTER XII.

HAPPY HUGH, A FLY IN THE WEB.

IT was plain to the boy detective that Joly Jenkins was in Denman's power.

While both were undoubtedly in the plot against Nelly Axtell and her fortune, the one feared the other, Jenkins was in his employers' clutches and the threat which Hugh heard Denman utter during the interview at the office was enough to make Joly promise to restore the missing paper.

Hugh had told Somers, his new acquaintance and Nelly's lover, when she was a lass of fifteen on the Axtell estate in Jersey, all he had learned about the mysterious case in which he had be-

come interested and the two had resolved to leave unturned no stone in their search for the girl and the bringing to justice of the conspirators.

The young shadow thought that Joly would go direct from the office to the missing document which he (Hugh) believed had been secreted at the manager's lodgings, and when Joly emerged from the Bureau he was seen by a pair of keen eyes.

Burt Denman was left alone and Joly was shadowed.

Jenkins still showed signs of the ordeal through which he had just passed and Hugh saw him turn into a street which would not take him to his quarters. He followed him, however, and tracked him at last to an open hallway alongside of which hung a tin sign that informed the public that Noah Natchett practised law and fleeced his clients up-stairs.

Joly did not remain out of sight very long. He came out in a hurry and in no good humor. Evidently his mission, whatever it was, had been unsuccessful, and Hugh was near enough to hear him curse his ill-luck.

"He's given me twelve hours," muttered Joly. "That's pretty good grace, and there's no telling what will happen before the time runs out. I wonder where the old shark lives? I never thought of looking before. If he hadn't taken that sudden turn on me I wouldn't be here now in this muddle. I guess I'm in Burt's clutches, but I needn't stay there. No! and what is more, I don't intend to!"

There was resolution in the last words, and Hugh thought Joly's eyes flashed as he spoke them.

Joly was followed to a drug-store, where he procured a directory, which he consulted a few moments. Closing the book with a bang, he came out upon the sidewalk, took his bearings, and hurried away.

Determined to keep at his heels a while longer in hopes of finding out what he was after, Happy Hugh continued to play shadow.

The manager of the "Eureka" led him a long chase to the heart of a quiet street, where he stopped in front of a house which he eyed from eave to step with much curiosity.

"That's the house he's been looking for," thought Hugh. "Now, who lives there?"

Joly did not seem to muster up courage enough to ring the bell for some time; but all at once he sprang up the steps and laid his hand on the knocker.

But the next moment he drew back as suddenly, and muttering something which Hugh could not catch, he came down and bolted away.

The truth is Joly had lost courage at the last moment. In spite of the threat which hung over his head, he had fled from Noah Natchett's house without ringing the bell, and the paper which he had promised to produce was still in the old lawyer's grip.

"Your heart failed you, Joly," said Hugh, smiling to himself. "You showed the white feather at the last moment. Are you going to let Burt Denman carry out his threat? Face the music, Mr. Jenkins!"

Happy Hugh tracked Joly to his lodgings, where he left him and sought his own.

The boy sharp was tired. Joly had led him a long chase, and, then, he wanted to think over the exciting interview which had taken place between the two rascals in the private office of the "Eureka."

To do this well he knew of no better place than his own little room in the tenement, and there he could lie at full length on the cot and aid reflection by a few tunes on the flute.

The boy was soon at home, and taking the flute from its pocket on the wall, he began to play. The soft strains which he drew from the instrument floated out through the open window, and while he played he seemed to forget the trail he had just left for a time.

All at once Hugh heard the creaking of the stairs that led up to his abode. He stopped in the middle of a tune and listened.

"It's no visitors of mine," said he. "Joly's home, 'Hijah Axtell's disappeared, and—"

There were steps in the carpetless corridor just beyond his door, and suddenly he heard a heavy knock.

Hugh lowered the flute and turned toward the portal.

"Come in," he said.

The next instant the bolt clicked, the door opened and Burt Denman stood before him!

Of course Happy Hugh knew nothing about the letter received by the sport informing him that a boy who could play the flute to perfection had called at No 555 on a certain street, and

had found a young lady who knew something about the same kind of music; but still he was surprised to see Denman in his room.

"At it, I see!" smiled Burt, glancing at the flute which had dropped into the boy's lap.

"Not very much," answered the boy detective.

"To whom am I indebted for this visit?"

Denman had come forward with evil in the depths of his eyes.

"No, thank you. I can't stay," said he, as Hugh offered him a chair. "I want to talk with you on a matter of business which concerns us both; but not here."

"Not here?" answered Happy Hugh. "Why not here? But you haven't told me who you are."

"Oh, my name is Nicholas," said Denman, at which the young flutist could hardly suppress a smile, for "Nicholas" was the name under which the sleek scamp had tried to ingratiate himself into the good graces of Ahijah Axtell.

"Well, Mr. Nicholas, you want to see me, eh?"

"I do, on important business, but not here."

"Where, then?"

"In my own lodgings which are free from prying ears, and not far away, either."

Hugh was anxious to see how far Burt Denman would go. He wanted to know what new piece of scheming the fellow was up to, yet, he did not like the thought of going with him to his room which might be a trap as well.

"If you knew the importance of the business you would humor me," continued Denman.

"But I have never seen you before, Mr. Nicholas."

"What, do you want reference?" grinned Denman, bursting into a laugh over his own remarks.

"Not that, of course; but—"

"By Jove! I've a mind to let you remain in the dark!" broke in Denman. "You ought to know that a house like this—a human bee-hive—is no place for private matters. Nobody's business is everybody's affair here. I can't talk under this roof, and if you don't want to hear what I have to say—and I repeat that it is very important—you must remain in the dark."

"I'm always ready to accommodate people," rejoined Hugh; "but, to tell the truth, there is something mysterious about this matter."

"Something suspicious, you mean?"

"I did not say so."

"No, but one can draw his own conclusions. You don't want to trust a gentleman. I see that."

Happy Hugh was afraid he was going to lose both Denman and a knowledge of his last bit of rascality.

"I will go with you, Mr. Nicholas, if I can come back soon," said he.

"You can return at the conclusion of our interview which will be short," was the response.

"I'll take the risk," thought Hugh. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Mr. Burt Denman is playing a new card. He wants to pump me, perhaps about Joly who has been my pupil. I'll go to his lodgings with my eyes open, and if he catches me napping I'll give up the fight."

The boy ferret got ready to go at once with Denman alias Nicholas.

He deftly concealed his flute in an inside pocket and turned out the gas so suddenly that Denman started.

"In a moment, Mr. Nicholas," said Hugh, stepping to the wall in the dark.

The following second he took from his pocket a pencil and leaning toward the bare wall wrote in large though not very handsome letters across it these words:

"June 17th, 10 p. m.—I have gone away with Burt Denman. If I don't come back, hold him responsible."

The man waiting with triumphant face at the door could not see Happy Hugh at work for the gloom which prevailed, and the first thing he knew the boy detective was before him saying that he was ready.

They went out, Hugh shutting but not locking the door behind them, and in a little while were on the street below.

"We won't take a car as it isn't a long walk," said Burt, looking down at his companion.

"I'm willing," answered Hugh. "My legs need stretching anyhow."

A walk of five minutes brought them to Denman's lodgings, or to a house which Hugh supposed was such.

Burt unlocked the front door and led the way up-stairs.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed, entering a room where he lit the gas after locking the door.

"Now, my young spy, do you know where you are?"

Happy Hugh did not fall back from the eyes that leered at him like a devil's.

"Yes, I know," said he. "You are not Mr. Nicholas, but Burt Denman."

The rascal-sport burst into a laugh.

"Right you are!" he cried. "My web never caught a fly easier than it caught you!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SPIDER'S BITE.

"WELL," thought Happy Hugh, thinking of the message he had left on the wall, "if I am in your web, Mr. Denman, it will be found out sooner or later. I have an engagement with Perry Somers at an early hour to-morrow and he will discover into whose clutches I have fallen."

Meantime, Burt Denman was looking at the boy flutist and secretly gloating over his success.

"You made your discovery a little too late!" he exclaimed. "You should have recognized me when I crossed your threshold."

"I did," answered Hugh.

"But you walked into the trap just the same. Were you trying an experiment?"

The boy said nothing.

"I want to tell you something," continued Denman, after lighting a cigar with aggravating coolness. "You're a street fox, as well as a musician. I've suspected it for some time, but I'm certain of it now."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you catch on?" grinned the scamp. "You understood me and I'm too old to be hoodwinked. What have you done with the old gentleman?"

Happy Hugh gave a slight start.

"Did you advise him to make himself scarce? He went off like that!" And Denman snapped his silken fingers.

Hugh looked as ignorant as possible.

"I mean Abijah Axtell," said Denman, leaning toward his young prisoner. "You've been with the old fellow; you have made yourself his clew-finder, and you think you've achieved a great victory."

The young detective was on the eve of declaring that he had found Nelly when he thought calmly and did not speak.

"I see that you won't be interviewed," resumed Burt. "I didn't expect you to be very loquacious—not under the existing circumstances at least. Well, hold your tongue!"

Denman left his chair and crossed the room, closely watched by Hugh who wondered what the next play would be.

The young man rolled a seat up to the desk which he opened. Then he drew forward writing materials and for several minutes wrote and destroyed and wrote again.

"What can he be shaping that gives him so much trouble?" mentally asked Hugh.

Presently Denman blotted some writing and turned in his chair.

"Read that," he said, handing the paper across the space that separated them.

Hugh took the writing with eager curiosity and holding it under the gas jet, read as follows:

"I, the undersigned, do solemnly swear to hunt no longer for one Nelly Axtell; to advise nobody concerning her whereabouts; to abandon the trail I have followed; and to quit New York within three hours, never to return unless absolved from this oath by the person in whose presence it is signed."

A flash of indignation overspread the face of the boy detective, deepening the longer he read. If Burt Denman had watched him closely, and perhaps he did, he would have seen defiance suddenly light up his eyes.

"What do you take me for?" cried Hugh, looking up and meeting the rascal's look.

"For a sensible person," smiled Denman.

"Do you expect me to sign that paper?"

"Why not?"

"I treat it thus?" And he tore the oath in two and threw both pieces at his feet.

Burt Denman said nothing for a moment. He got white, flushed and whitened again.

"You don't look ahead!" said he, trying to smother his anger.

"I don't need to if it holds any of your threats."

"It holds more than threats—the future does I mean. Your name to that paper means your liberty."

"Then the withholding of it means the opposite?"

"It does!"

Denman picked up the pieces and placed them on the desk.

"I will draw up another," he continued, taking up a pen.

"If it ever reaches my hands it will share the fate of the first."

"Fool!" grated Burt.

Happy Hugh did not reply, but looked silently at the man who was playing a desperate game for big stakes.

"Well, take things as they come and don't growl over the bill of fare!" suddenly cried Denman, throwing down the pen. "My young man, I have clipped your wings for good. You are as much lost to the world as if you had gone down on some lost steamer. You have played the fox too well. I very much fear that Joly has lost a tutor and Happy Hugh a pupil."

He shut the desk with a bang, and coming up to Hugh bent over him with a malicious look.

"Has the old man gone home?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"Does he expect to find Nelly Axtell?"

"He does, and he shall!" cried Hugh.

"Then he will have to hunt her alone!" laughed Denman.

"Not altogether alone. You forget one thing, Mr. Denman."

"What's that?"

"You forget Inspector Byrnes and his men."

Denman fell back with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

"What did the sharps do when the girl first disappeared?" he asked. "There was a healthy reward to stimulate them, but what did they accomplish, I say?"

"They did not find her."

"Of course they did not, and what can they do with a trail five years old? Besides, you yourself are at fault. You ought to remember that there are a thousand Nellys in New York. The one you saw a few hours ago must have disappointed you. Did she tell you her name was Nelly Axtell?"

Hugh did not answer.

He had not forgotten that the girl flutist had told him that her name was *not* Nelly Axtell, but he had thought that she may have been forced to make a statement of this sort. For all this, he still believed that she was the New Jersey Nelly—the girl who had disappeared from the cozy home of "Uncle Hijiha."

"On the contrary," continued Denman, "she told you that she was *not* the Axtell girl, though her name is Nelly. Come, Mr. Hugh; you had best reconsider your hot-headed resolve and sign the note you destroyed."

"Never!"

A satanic smile followed Happy Hugh's reply, and the next moment, without the slightest warning, Burt Denman's two hands swooped down upon him, and before he could resist at all he was in their grip.

"The parley is ended!" hissed the scoundrel-sport, becoming dark in the face. "I don't intend to be checkmated by an obstacle of your ilk. You did not have to oppose me. I never did you any harm, and you were not obliged to drop your flute to look after my affairs."

Happy Hugh was pressed down in the chair until he could not move. The vicious hands of Denman was at his throat, and the soft fingers sinking into the windpipe, as it seemed, were changing the hue of everything in the room and turning the light to darkness.

This went on for some time, then strange things danced before the boy detective's eyes, and suddenly everything became dark.

Burt Denman fell back and looked at the boy in the chair.

Hugh's hat had fallen to the floor, and his arms hung limp over the arms of the chair, while his head, thrown back, revealed the distorted features of a person choked into insensibility.

"The street fox was making good headway—too good for me!" said Denman, turning from Hugh with a last look and walking over to the desk which he opened again.

He picked up the paper which the young shadow had torn in twain and held the pieces in the flame of the jet until they fell from his hand like black feathers.

"Now, unless Joly, the schemer, keeps his promise, I'll have to look after another stumbling block," said Denman aloud. "He says he don't know where the old man went; but he won't be very hard to find. Something occurred to cause Abijah Axtell to desert his hotel without warning. Did he see some one whom he did not care to meet?"

Burt now opened the door and looked out. The gas was burning so dimly in the hall that the place was nearly dark. He inspected it for a moment and then came back.

Stooping over the limp body of Happy Hugh he lifted it from the chair.

As he did so something fell from the boy's pocket and struck the floor with a sharp sound.

Denman looked down over his shoulder and saw—a flute.

"The little Orpheus is always armed," laughed the city sport, kicking the flute across the floor and seeing it roll under his cot which stood at one side of the room. "I guess he won't need it any more—not to excite Nelly with, at any rate."

The next minute he had carried Hugh across the room and out of the door he had lately opened, disappearing among the shadows of the hall beyond.

At the end of the hallway he found a flight of steps which led down into a dark back yard, cramped like all city yards are in the crowded districts.

The man with his lifeless burden looked downward for several minutes, as if making sure that the coast was clear.

At last, evidently satisfied with the outlook, he began to ascend the stairs and stood at length on solid ground.

Straight ahead was the door of a rickety shed. Burt went forward and opened it with one hand, then plunged into the darkness of the place beyond and vanished.

Twenty minutes afterward, with his mustache fashionably waxed, his boots well polished and dressed in an elegant suit of clothes, he took a seat in a swell restaurant and ordered an elaborate supper, as if he had no crime on his conscience.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FATAL LARK.

MR. JOLY JENKINS looked like a man at his wits' end when he came back to his lodgings after his visit to the old lawyer's office and house.

The manager of the Eureka was in a dilemma. He threw himself upon a chair and for a few minutes swore roundly without ceasing, cursing himself, Burt Denman and Noah Natchett, all three sometimes in one breath.

"I've lost my chance," exclaimed Joly. "I lost it when I let that old shark of the law take possession of that paper. I won't be able to get it back for he knows what it is and will hang to it like grim death. If I don't get it Burt will carry out his threat in some manner and I'll be in the soup. What shall I do?"

He thought a moment and then went on.

"I might baffle him by giving the whole scheme away to the police," he went on. "I guess that old reward for Nelly Axtell still holds good, but I don't care so much for the money. I'd like to get ahead of him—to beat him at his own game. But hang it all! there's that old crime of mine! there's the dead man found in the river. When I saw Dan Soovey, the crazy man, jump at Burt I knew him, and it's no wonder that I keeled over. I thought the dead had come to life when I knew they never do that. Well's he's dead enough now without having found the girl. What shall I do? That's the question just now."

Whenever Joly canvassed the subject he always found himself confronted by his dilemma.

"I've got to do something soon," said he.

"My twelve hours of grace are running away. I can't hope to get that paper from Noah Natchett, and Denman has me in his fist and knows I know it. Why not jump the town?"

This idea, coming like an inspiration to Joly, seemed to electrify him.

He sprang up, and for a little while danced around the room.

"But I'll leave a sting behind, that's what I'll do!" he exclaimed. "I won't go off harmless and leave a clear field for him. I won't threaten, but I'll act. I sha'n't go to the police and tell what I know, for they'd want to hold me as a witness. I'll just send a mysterious letter, wording it in such a way as to have the desired effect without getting me into a box."

He went over to his writing-table, put his legs under the mahogany top, and went to work.

For twenty minutes he wrote rapidly. At the end of this time he had given the true history of Nelly Axtell's disappearance, wording it in such a way as not to implicate himself, but all the time making his employer, Burt Denman, the central figure in the villainy. Joly told an interesting story. He referred to the missing leaf of the parish register, and told where it was to be found. He also said that the girl guarded by the woman who had lately moved from "No. 555" was the lost heiress of the Scottish estate, and wound up by saying that Burt Denman was probably the greatest, as well as the sleekest rascal in New York.

He read his paper with a good deal of pleasure when he had blotted the last page. It looked

perfect in his eye, and when he had made a few corrections he inclosed it in a long envelope, which he addressed to Inspector Byrnes.

"That's the sting, Mr. Denman," exclaimed Joly, thrusting the confession into his pocket and picking up his hat. "I'll just drop it into a letter-box, and then come back here and pack up."

He looked at his watch, and noted that the hour was waxing late.

As he was about to quit the room he heard footsteps on the stairs, and the next moment Nips, the clerk of the "Eureka," burst into the apartment.

Joly and Nips had always been friends, having had a number of larks together; but just now the manager wished the clerk had not come.

Nips, from all appearances, had been spending his wages pretty freely, and his voice was thick, and Joly was not long finding out that he had come to propose a lark which, as Nips expressed it, should be "a reg'lar won't go home till morning affair."

Jenkins, with the precious document in his pocket, rejected the suggestion, whereupon Nips returned to the charge with renewed vigor, and painted things in such glowing colors that poor Joly yielded, and they went off together.

We shall not follow the two attaches of the "Eureka" through the mazes of their wanderings. They went from scene to scene, having what they termed "a jolly good time," which means that both got very hilarious, and Joly forgot all about posting the narrative for Inspector Byrnes.

The early hours of the morning found Joly back in his little room on the second floor of his landlady's house, the occupant of an arm-chair, and fast asleep.

He could not have told how he had reached the place; but he was there, in a dilapidated condition, and utterly oblivious of everything around him.

It happened that while Joly reposed in this condition, a young man in good clothes, passing along the street, looked up and saw a light in one of his windows.

The pedestrian was Burt Denman.

The schemer looked at his watch and then sent another glance toward the window.

"If he's made a move he's done so before this," murmured Burt. "I'll run up and see."

Going to the door, he found it slightly ajar, thanks to Joly's condition when he came home, and the following moment he was climbing the stairs to his manager's room.

When Denman pushed open Joly's door, and beheld the tableau just beyond, he stopped and gave vent to an exclamation of surprise.

There lay Joly in the chair, as limp as a rag, with the flaring jet overhead revealing his true condition.

"Been out, eh?" ejaculated Denman, crossing the room with a grin on his face. "This doesn't look like getting back an important paper."

He stood over Joly, and for some minutes looked down at him with contemptuous silence.

"I've a mind to shake you up!" grated Burt, his hand at the same time falling upon Joly's shoulder. "I guess we'd better dissolve partnership."

Just then his sharp eyes discovered something on the inside of Joly's coat. It looked just enough like the corner of an envelope to excite his curiosity, and in a moment he had opened the coat and drawn it forth.

What did he see? A letter, addressed in Joly's handwriting, to Inspector Byrnes!

Denman's eyes dilated at this discovery. The letter trembled in his hands, and he sent a mad look at the unconscious author.

"I'm of the opinion that you've written your own death-warrant, you miserable wretch!" he cried. "I didn't think you'd go quite this far, though I never had much faith in you. But I'll see to what limits your innate rascality has taken you."

Denman drew back and with the blade of his knife opened the envelope with much care. Then relieved it of its contents and the first glance at them nearly sent the document to the floor.

As he read on, his face flushed and paled alternately and the looks he sent toward Joly boded that individual no good.

"This is the luckiest discovery of my life!" exclaimed Denman when he had finished the betrayal. "It's like finding a gold mine. So Noah Natchett, the vulture attorney, has the missing leaf? I'll see that he doesn't keep it, and I'll take care too that Inspector Byrnes never profits by your clever bit of treachery, Joly. This is your idea of 'getting even,' I

presume. Well, it's a lamentable failure; that's all I have to say."

Denman went to the table where he found writing materials and a bottle of mucilage.

Making use of the last named article first, he carefully resealed the letter and then wrote beneath the address a few words which he underscored.

All this time a smile played with Denman's lips as though he thought he was doing a sleek piece of business.

When he had finished, he glided to Joly's side and returned the document to his pocket without disturbing him.

"I guess a thunderbolt will strike you when you come out of your trance," he grinned. "The next time you'll post your letters while you're sober. Good-night and pleasant dreams, Joly," and Denman laughed a mocking laugh and left the room.

Several hours passed over Joly's head after his visitor's departure. The city clocks struck but he heard them not. The carts began to rattle once more over the stony street below but he was oblivious to the noise they made. Joly's sleep was like the sleep of death.

At last the long arrows of the new day came in at his window.

He came out of his deep slumber and rubbed his eyes. His surprise was great when he found himself in the chair and not in bed.

"What does this mean?" cried Joly, and then the events of the night—or some of them, at least—came to him.

"I recollect now! Nips came, I went out with him—what a fool I was!"

Then he thought of the letter.

"I wonder if I posted that document?" he said, feeling for his pocket. "No, here it is. What if I had lost it last night?"

He drew it forth and looked at the address.

But what did he see?

There was writing on the envelope which he had not put there!

"Joly's eyes suddenly bulged out as if about to burst from his head.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "He has been here!"

Well might he utter these words for he had read on the envelope the following:

"I have read the inclosure and approve of it. Please deliver at once to Inspector Byrnes!"

"DENMAN."

The letter fell from Joly's hands!

CHAPTER XV.

PHELAN TAKES THE TRAIL.

MR. PHIL PHELAN, the young independent detective and Happy Hugh's friend sat alone in his room with his heels upon his little round table and a cigar between his teeth.

He was in very good humor just then, for he had just finished a small burglary case which has no bearing on our story, and he felt like telling his triumph to some one—Happy Hugh for instance—if that person would only step in.

A long and uneventful day was drawing to a close, and now and then a puff of air laden with the saltiness of the sea came in at the detective's open window.

"He doesn't come," said Phelan glancing toward the door, "and it's not worth my while sitting here waiting for him to drop in. Now I'm free for a spell—got nothing on my hands and if we had a clew to that Jersey girl who went off some years ago, Hugh and I would work the case together. He's inclined to be independent, though," chuckled Phelan. "I like his spirit, though I can't say that I always admire his judgment. I'll go down and see him."

Locking his door, the detective went away and after a brisk walk of a few minutes found himself ascending the creaking stairs to Happy Hugh's quarters.

It was the day after the successful springing of Burt Denman's trap, an event which Phelan knew nothing about.

It was not his first visit to Hugh's lodgings and he knew the way too well to ask for instructions, therefore he was soon at the door.

Knocking was not considered necessary by the detective, so he opened the door which was not locked, and stepped into the room.

He found no one at home.

"Not in, eh?" exclaimed Phelan taking a survey of the interior.

"He may be giving his pupil, Mr. Jenkins, of the 'Eureka,' a lesson on the flute, but it looks to me like no one has been here in twenty-four hours."

There was about the premises an air of desertion which did not escape the observing detective.

He stepped to the table and opened its solitary drawer.

"He keeps his flute here, but it is gone," he said, aloud. "For all this, something tells me that the unexpected has taken place. Happy Hugh hasn't been at home for some time."

It happened that at this particular moment Phelan looked toward the wall beyond the table.

What did he see there?

If his eyes had not deceived him there were pencil-marks on the white surface—marks which he knew were not there on his last visit.

The next moment the young detective had stepped forward and was eagerly devouring the message which Happy Hugh had written in the dark:

"JUNE 17th—10 P. M.

"I have gone away with Burt Denman. If I don't come back hold him responsible."

HUGH."

The words intended for Somers, Nelly Axtell's former lover, had been found by another, a person who, though a detective and Happy Hugh's friend, was supposed to know nothing of Denman's connection with the Axtell mystery.

"With Burt Denman!" exclaimed Phelan.

"Why, that's the man who was attacked by the crazy tramp, Sooley. He's the owner of the Eureka Employment Bureau, and Joly Jenkins, his manager, is Hugh's pupil. 'If I don't come back hold him (Mr. Denman that means) responsible.' This looks like a game of villainy. Well, Hugh hasn't come back since writing that sentence, and, Mr. Denman, it is my duty as the boy's best friend, to hold you responsible."

A minute afterward Phil Phelan stood on the first landing interviewing a large woman who almost took up an entire doorway.

"I remember seein' the boy go off with a man," said this person.

"With what sort of a man?" asked Phelan.

"A dudish-lookin' chap in salt-an'-pepper clothes, a waxed mustache an' a ratan cane."

"That's Mr. Denman in a nutshell; I've seen him," said the detective to himself.

"When did the boy go away?"

Mrs. Yellowplush, the general overseer of the big house, gave the hour as near as she could, and added that "the gentleman looked pleased an' happy."

"And you haven't seen Happy Hugh since?"

"He hasn't come back, for we'd have heard his flute if he had," was the quick response. "You don't think anything's happened to him, I hope?"

Phelan thought not in order to curb the woman's inquisitiveness and get away from her as soon as possible, and the moment he succeeded in doing the latter, he left the house and began the hunt for Hugh.

Phelan as yet had not connected Nelly Axtell with Happy Hugh's disappearance but he was soon to be enlightened in an unexpected manner.

He had not proceeded a block when he heard quick footsteps behind him, and as he turned to see who made them, his arm was grasped by an excited and flushed young man.

"My name is Somers—Perry Somers!" said the youth. "I have just been to Happy Hugh's lodgings for the fifth time since morning, and Mrs. Yellowplush has told me that you were looking for him. I'm afraid the trap has been sprung."

"The trap?" echoed Phelan, looking down into the young man's face. "What trap?"

"Don't you know?" cried young Somers, showing a surprised countenance. "The men who stole Nelly Axtell are playing a deep-laid game and I'm afraid that Hugh, who was on their track, has been caught at work."

This was enough for Phelan.

Like a flash several things, disconnected until now, came to his mind.

"I want all you know told in brief and compressed into a few minutes," he said to Somers. "We'll step aside there," and he led the way to a very cheap restaurant where he sought out the furthest table and ordered coffee for two.

"Now, tell me everything, Mr. Somers," said he. "I am Philip Phelan, a detective, and Happy Hugh's friend."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Somers before he began, and a moment later his tongue was going like a bell-clapper.

It is needless to say that the detective listened intently to the close of the narrative. Somers told all he knew, which was a good deal, for Happy Hugh had given him his own experience on the trail.

"I see," thought Phelan, while Somers rattled on. "The boy wanted to work the case alone, and I'm not going to blame him. He's got to rely on himself some time, and he can't commence too young. I'm afraid, though, that he

has a sharper pitted against him. This dude, Denman, is a rogue of the first water and the couple are playing for big money—Nelly Axtell's Scottish fortune."

"I'll begin now, Mr. Somers," continued Phelan aloud, laying his hand on the young man's arm.

"Do you think you can find him?"

The detective smiled.

"I've never failed yet and it gives me pleasure to say so."

"Don't you think he's fallen into a pitfall of some kind?"

"To be plain, it has that appearance," answered Phelan.

"And he went away last night?"

"Yes."

"With the head plotter—Burt Denman."

"That is true. See here, Mr. Somers; you must look for Mr. Ahijah Axtell. I have no doubt that your meeting with the old gentleman caused him to change his quarters. I am confident that he hasn't left the city. While I look for Hugh, you must make the rounds of the commonplace hotels of New York. You won't find him at the Astor, nor the Fifth Avenue; but he's gone to some snuggery to keep away from certain people."

"From me, for instance," smiled Somers. "I'll find him if he's to be found."

With this Phelan paid the score at the cashier's desk of the restaurant, and the two went away.

A square from the place they parted, and Phelan looking over his shoulder watched the young bookkeeper until he disappeared.

"I rather like him," said the detective. "I fancy that he's just the sort of fellow for lost Nelly Axtell, though somehow or other he didn't please her grandfather. He's given me a clew, though. I never heard a story told better than he told his. Now for Happy Hugh, the fly in the web."

Phelan's first move was toward the "Eureka," which he found closed for the night. The books had been posted early, for there was no light about the premises, and—Phelan knew it not, of course—there would never be another under the present management.

The detective was not long finding Denman's lodgings, for Somers had located them from information obtained from Happy Hugh.

As he looked up at the front windows of the second story he wondered what his visit would reveal, but in a moment he was knocking at the lower door.

"Denman don't know me," thought Phelan. "I am a man with money to invest in an employment agency doing a good business, though Mr. Denman won't want to share his golden egg with any one."

In response to his summons he was brought face to face with a young woman who thought Mr. Denman was in his room, and when she offered to call him into the parlor, Phelan objected, and said he would run up and save her that trouble.

His raps on Denman's door elicited no response; then he tried the knob, but it would not turn.

"Locked out, eh?" exclaimed the detective. "We'll see about this," and he produced several little lock-pickers from his pockets.

The first one selected opened the door, and the detective walked into Burt Denman's room.

Of course he did not find that worthy at home.

Every piece of furniture was in its place, the room was clean, and neat, like Denman's personal appearance, and Phelan looked disappointed though not discouraged.

There was not light enough for his investigations, so he drew the curtains together and lit the gas.

His next move was toward Denman's desk the lock of which he adroitly picked, but the victory proved a barren one.

"If it is true, as Somers says, that certain papers which prove Nelly's claims to the Scottish estate are missing they must be in Burt Denman's possession," murmured the detective. "This is his private abode and he would naturally keep them here. Let me find them, and I'll bring the rascal to time."

He began to search the room for a secret hiding place, taking care to restore to its proper place everything he moved.

He sounded the wall carefully, felt the carpet with his hands and looked into every corner.

At last he took hold of the cot and moved it from the wall.

To look behind it he needed a light, so he struck a match and leaned forward.

The following moment he uttered a startling cry.

Against the base-board and at his feet something shone like polished silver.

Phelan's hand swooped downward like an eagle. It closed on the object he had discovered and in a second he was looking at Happy Hugh's flute!

"This may hang you, Burt Denman!" he said.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "EUREKA" LOSES ITS MANAGER.

THERE was nothing else in the room for Phelan but the flute, and putting it in his pocket, he went over the premises once more and took his departure.

It did not strike the detective that Burt Denman had carried Happy Hugh through the dark hallway which ran to the rear of the building and thence down the steps leading into the back yard.

He believed that Hugh had been enticed to the room in which the flute had been found; that he had, after a struggle, been taken away perhaps in a closed cab by the schemer; and thought it not unlikely, now that he knew so much, that the "Eureka" might further advance his prospects.

Meantime another of our characters was having a serious time, and, leaving Phelan for a few moments, we will follow his fortunes.

We have seen how the writing on the envelope containing Joly Jenkins's confession had startled that individual.

He knew that, while sleeping off his drunken stupor which he charged to Nips, the clerk, Denman had opened and read the letter.

It was all up with him now.

Should he not go direct to Mulberry street and lodge with the police information against Denman? In another hour it might be too late; Denman might carry out his threat and he (Joly) might find himself behind iron bars charged with a crime which would tighten a rope around his neck.

But Joly hesitated. He did not know what to do. Now he thought of betraying the plot, and now of flying without posting his confession, hoping by this means to escape the vengeance of his employer.

Between resolve and fear, he passed the most miserable day in his existence.

Nips opened the Bureau and wondered what had become of Joly. As the day advanced and patrons presented themselves, Nips's wonder increased; but he finally concluded that the lark had been too much for the manager and thought he would "turn up all right" the next day.

When night came Jenkins crept from his place of concealment.

He went along the street like a guilty man. Before quitting his lodgings he had taken pains to disguise himself and while he could not change his peculiar walk, he had succeeded in rendering himself in appearance very unlike the manager of the Eureka.

Every now and then Joly looked behind him. He was fearful of having Denman at his heels—not Denman his old friend and companion, but Denman the tiger and his deadly foe.

Joly went by a circuitous route to Noah Natchett's office.

"The old rascal shall surrender the document unless Denman has secured it, for my confession informed him where it was," said Jenkins to himself. "I can buy peace with it, and I'm not ready to be locked up for that awful mistake of mine."

He went up Natchett's stairs and listened at the old law-shark's door.

A light was burning beyond the portal, and the key-hole enabled Joly to see the spectacled face of the lawyer bending over the table.

All at once a desperate thought took possession of Joly's brain.

Goaded by it he turned the knob softly and the door opened—opened without noise.

Joly's eyes shone like a basilisk's while he stood on the threshold and glared at the man whom he had not disturbed.

"Alone! I've got every thing my own way!" thought Joly, still eying Natchett. "He thinks I'm squares and squares away, but here I am—in his den—and all I have to do is to play tiger for half a minute."

One of Joly's feet slipped forward on the matting, then the other crept in front of it, and in this manner, tiger-like, he advanced upon the unconscious man.

Noah Natchett was immersed in a paper before him.

When Joly looked at it he nearly let slip a cry.

The old man was looking at the identical document he had come for!

Yellow and time-stained it lay on the table in

front of him—the leaf which recorded the marriage of Mortimer Axtell against his father's wishes.

Joly knew where the other proofs were. They were locked up in the safe in the private office of the "Eureka." He had stolen the paper on the lawyer's table for the purpose of asking Natchett about its genuineness, little dreaming that the old lawyer, as parish clerk, had recorded the very events thereon!

In a short time Joly Jenkins was hovering like a hawk over Noah Natchett and the precious paper. He did not breathe.

Slowly his hand crept forward, crossing the table like a shadow, and all at once it pounced upon the leaf and snatched it from under the old lawyer's eyes!

A startling cry rang from Noah's throat as he fell back and saw the thief.

"You?" he cried, evidently recognizing Joly in spite of his disguise. "You can't carry off that paper! It's worth its weight in diamonds, and, besides, it's needed to right a great wrong."

"Of course it is!" broke in Joly. "I guess I need it as badly as you do."

"But you can't have it, I say!"

"Can't, eh? Haven't I got possession and you know that's nine points in law, ha, ha!"

Old Noah said nothing, but left his chair and took a step toward Joly.

"Stand back!" cried Jenkins.

"While you have that paper? I will not. I know where he is. I saw him to-day."

"You saw whom?" asked Joly, his curiosity thoroughly aroused.

"Mortimer Axtell!"

"Pshaw! you saw nothing of the kind, old man!" laughed the thief.

"I did. He has been called dead these many years," said Natchett. "His name stands on the record you hold in your hand. I say that Mortimer Axtell—the real one—is living and even now is nearer than you think. I knew him the moment I saw him, though I hadn't set eyes on him since the day I saw him married in Scotland. He told me everything. The big estate was to descend to a daughter. There was one, but she died; then there was a son and he married to become the father of a little girl who is the heir now."

"But, where is she?" grinned Joly.

"Ah, why do you ask me that question?" retorted old Noah. "You had a hand in the plot!"

"In what plot?"

"The one that was carried out five years ago."

"You lie!" grated Joly.

The lawyer took another step toward the man near the door.

"That's close enough!" cried Jenkins, thrusting the stolen paper into his bosom.

"No, 'tis not!" And then there was a leaping forward, and despite his years Noah Natchett fell upon Joly, and beating down the hands which he thrust out in self-defense, forced him against the door where both men struggled as if for life.

"He's a lion in strength," thought Joly. "If he conquers me I'm gone, and the game is up. I must not let the old shark come off best."

Joly was afraid that some one in another part of the building might hear the noise of the struggle and come to the lawyer's rescue. This thought made him put forward his best licks, and the scuffle was at its height when the door was forced open and both men, falling out into the corridor, pitched toward the stairs and battled on their brink.

The horror of falling down the dark steps seemed to freeze the very marrow in Joly's bones.

He made a desperate attempt to break loose from Noah's grip, and succeeded at last only to find himself falling headlong toward the sidewalk.

Somewhere on the way down or at the bottom, Joly was never able to tell where, consciousness deserted him and when he came back to life he was rattling over the streets in a patrol wagon.

He lay still for a few moments trying to recall the events of the night, but with indifferent success.

"Where am I, anyhow?" said he. "I feel as if my bones were broken or tumbled into a heap. I must have fallen somewhere. Ah, yes! I went to Noah Natchett's, but what happened there?"

The next moment he managed to raise a hand which he thrust into his bosom.

"The old shark kept the prize for all!" he went on. "I had a chance to go away, but I

wouldn't take it. Well, I ought to pay for my folly."

The patrol kept on until Joly reached the accident ward of a hospital where his hurts were examined.

"Will I go this time?" he asked looking up into the surgeon's face.

"I guess not; we can't spare you," was the reply, accompanied by a grim smile which Joly understood.

Such was the "peck of trouble" in which Joly Jenkins found himself while Phil Phelan was ransacking Denman's room for a clew to Happy Hugh.

If the detective had known of the struggle for the missing registry leaf and its results, he might have gone to the hospital and found Joly very penitent; but he was not to hear of these things until too late to profit by them.

It was the end of Joly Jenkins.

For once the doctors missed their guess, for at midnight, when one of the nurses went to look at the occupant of cot No. 12, he found him very quiet, and his experienced eye told him that the "Eureka" had lost its manager!

Burt Denman had naught to fear from Joly now.

He could play spider as before; he could keep the secret of Nelly Axtell's whereabouts without Joly hunting for it; he could keep also what he knew about the boy fox of Gotham; but he did not know that another had picked up the skein, nor that the "dead" was to come to life to plague him again.

His web never looked stronger and, to his notion, there was no fly it could not catch and kill.

CHAPTER XVII.

PHELAN PLAYS "FLY."

PHIL PHELAN, the detective, could think of nothing but the new trail he was following and had resolved not to give it up until he had cleared up the mystery which surrounded his young friend's disappearance.

The finding of the boy's flute in Burt Denman's room weighed heavily against the city spider, in Phelan's mind. It confirmed the writing he had found on the wall of Hugh's room—to the effect that he had gone away with Denman.

"I'm afraid the boy presumed too much upon his own abilities," said Phelan to himself. "He wanted to try his hand alone on a big case and the result is that he has fallen into a trap and may be dead."

The detective had given young Somers his address, and once when he went back to his lodgings he found the young man waiting for him.

"Well, I've found Ahijah Axtell!" exclaimed Somers, the moment he saw Phelan.

"That's quick work," smiled the detective.

"Yes, but accident helped me."

"It helps all of us at times. Where is the old man?"

"He is stopping at a snuggery on the west side."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No, I did not disturb him at all."

"That is good. Let him think himself entirely lost to you, for you are the cause of his sudden change of quarters. Now, let me show you something."

Phelan took from his pocket the latest edition of a city paper and handed it to Somers, designating a certain paragraph with his finger.

The young clerk read for a moment and looked up astonished.

"That's news to me!" he exclaimed, for he had just read a brief account of Joly Jenkins's death at the hospital.

"Our friend Denman has lost his partner," remarked the detective. "Joly, the manager of the 'Eureka,' has passed over the river, and I'll bet my head that Denman, when he heard of the circumstance, did not drop a tear."

Somers did not speak, but by his look invited Phelan to proceed.

"I have just come from Noah Natchett, the old lawyer, and the man whom Joly assaulted," the detective went on. "The old man is secretive and careful. He refuses to tell why he was attacked, but I can see that the incident has a bearing on the case we have in hand. From his story, the wonder is that he escaped with his life. Joly was desperate; he went to the lawyer's den to obtain something which he did not get."

"What do you think it was, Mr. Phelan?" asked Somers.

"A document of some kind," was the reply.

"A paper that bears on the Axtell case."

At mention of the name the clerk started.

"You have found no clew to Nelly's whereabouts have you?" he cried.

"No; Happy Hugh first with me, now."

"Do you consider him in the web?"

"He is there, but I have rescued his flute."

At the same time Phelan held up the boy detective's flute, which at once caught the clerk's eye and held his gaze.

"Next to finding the boy himself, is the discovery of the flute," continued Phelan. "It's a link in the chain and a very important link, too."

"What am I to do next?" asked Somers after a minute's silence.

"Keep an eye on Ahijah Axtell, and, if you should see Denman abroad, follow him; but don't molest the scamp."

Somers promised to obey and soon after both were down on the street again where they speedily separated.

About an hour later a rather well-dressed man crossed the threshold of the "Eureka" and walked up to the counter behind which on his stool at the registering desk sat Nips, with a sad cast of countenance, for he had heard of Joly's untimely end at the hospital.

"Good-morning!" saluted Nips, to the newcomer. "What can we do for you?"

The man addressed sent a quick glance toward the door of the private office which stood slightly ajar at that moment.

"Is the proprietor in?" he asked.

Nips was perplexed. He did not know what to say, for, knowing that Denman was in the private office, he did not like to assume the responsibility of introducing the visitor to him.

"Ahem! I register names and answer questions," said Nips, evading the query.

"But you are not the proprietor, I believe."

"No, I am not, but—"

"I have called to see him on important business."

Nips slipped from his stool and went to the office door.

Poking his head into the sanctum, he exchanged a few words in low tones with some one, and then, drawing back, told the person waiting at the counter that Mr. Denman would see him.

The next moment the caller entered the office and the door was closed.

Burt Denman was half-enveloped in cigar smoke when he found himself face to face with his caller who looked like a man of forty with rather abundant brown whiskers and a pair of expressive eyes.

"My name is Compton," said the Spider's visitor, dropping into a chair near the desk. "I have just learned of the death of Mr. Jenkins, your late manager, an event known to you, of course."

Denman nodded with a smile at his lips.

"I have some money to invest in a paying business, but I have no desire to become a silent partner," Mr. Compton went on.

Denman smoked and said nothing.

"I was thinking that perhaps you would like to fill the place vacated by Mr. Jenkins's untimely death," pursued the stranger. "I believe I would find it congenial, and, then, I have some plans for enlarging the Bureau which might meet with your approbation."

Burt had begun to think what a sleek-tongued fellow he was listening to. With his net always in trim and ready to hold every golden insect that came in contact with it, he thought if here wasn't a chance to add to his wealth.

"I don't know what my own plans for the future are," said he. "You see this sudden death, which fills me with sadness (this was, as the reader knows, a downright falsehood), has put things 'at sea,' though, when we have straightened out the tangle, I may be ready to entertain a proposition from some energetic man."

"Why wait till then?" quickly asked Compton. "I might find another place for my money and—"

"How much would you like to invest?"

There was in Denman's tones an eagerness which he could not conceal.

"My limit is, for the present, ten thousand," was the answer.

"Where do you reside, Mr. Compton?"

"When at home I am to be found at Number —, Eighth avenue."

Denman made a note of the address on the blotter before him.

"Mr. Jenkins was well up in his business, wasn't he?" queried Denman's visitor.

"Joly knew all the tricks of the trade," smiled the spider.

"Met with an accident, I hear?"

"Yes; he thought he had been swindled by a

lawyer and the old shark threw him down-stairs."

"Causing his death?"

"Just so."

"Any arrest?"

"None that I've heard of."

"But there will be, I presume? You will see that the old shark, as you call him, is made to answer for depriving you of such a help as Mr. Jenkins?"

Denman seemed to turn uneasily in his chair.

"The law ought to and does attend to these things," he said, and then he smiled as he went on: "But, why push the matter? You can't bring the dead to life, and it would be mighty hard to convict an old law-shark like that. I may look at your proposition with favor, Mr. Compton."

"Soon?"

"Soon, if at all."

"I would request that you give the matter thought before night."

"That is soon," laughed Denman.

"I am liable to go elsewhere at any time. My money burns my fingers, and I want to give the 'Eureka' a new start. I think I have the right plans. We could make it the agency of the city."

"No doubt of that," and Denman rubbed his silken hands.

"Shall I come for a reply?" asked Compton.

"You can."

"When?"

"Say at nine o'clock to-night."

"At your private rooms?"

"No; here. We shut up at six, and I'll drop in here in time to meet you."

Mr. Compton bowed and promised to be punctual. Denman offered him a cigar, which he took with another bow, and then looked after him with a cunning smile as he left the office.

"The web's always set!" laughed the spider, falling back into his chair. "It isn't often that a fly of that size gets into it, and when one does come you have to seize it carefully. I think I went just far enough. I'll hold him till nine, and then proceed to enmesh him beyond all hope of escape. Ten thousand dollars, eh? I need that sum to complete my play. Joly has stepped down and out; the boy-fox will run no more trails, and I will hasten the matter between myself and the fly in the up-town web. I'm hard to beat when I play with all my cunning; I'm Denman, the Invincible!"

He smoked away until he grew tired of contemplating himself in the role of victor, and then left the Bureau, after giving Nips some instructions.

He walked to the first corner and took a car, by which he was carried up-town.

A smile of satisfaction still illumined his face.

In one corner of that same car, with a newspaper before his face, sat the very man who had lately left his office.

Denman did not see Compton, but Compton saw the spider, and when the latter quitted the car he also alighted.

"The trail grows warm!" chuckled Compton, shadowing the proprietor of the "Eureka" to a quiet-looking house. "Phil Phelan, you ought to be congratulated on your morning's success!"

So "Compton" was Happy Hugh's friend, Phelan.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BREAKING THE WEB.

"THIS is a web, sure enough! Burt Denman knew what he was talking about when he said his net had caught me, and was strong enough to hold its victims. The rascal robbed me of my flute, and I can't solace myself with its music. If I had only let Phelan into the secret! If I had only thrown out a hint to Phil, there might be some show to get out of this trap, but as it is—"

The speaker paused as though a command had broken the last sentence, but a moment later, striking his leg with his clinched hand, by way of emphasis, he went on:

"No, I won't give up the game. I'm in a tight box, 'tis true—a very tight box, but I've been in 'em before, and always got out. Of course I don't know how I got from Denman's lodgings to this place, wherever it is, though I must have been unconscious when I made the journey. Therefore, I don't know where I lost my flute; but I'm sure I had it when I accompanied Denman home."

While he spoke thus he occupied a three-legged stool, and was leaning against a stone wall.

Across the chamber, which suggested a cellar from its wall, and higher up than he had been

able to reach, was a small window which enabled light and air to reach him.

Hugh had tried a hundred times to reach that window. He wondered how strong the bars were. They appeared to be as thick as his fingers, but rusty as well, and while he looked he fancied that he was strong enough to twist them off if he could but reach them.

He drew back and looked most wistfully at the window, but the situation seemed to goad him to renewed exertion.

He noticed that there projected from the sill an iron spike. It looked strong enough to bear his weight.

"It's an experiment, of course," said the lad, "but it's worth trying."

He jerked off his coat and carried the stool beneath the window.

The next moment he was trying to catch the coat upon the nail, and after several efforts succeeded.

Hugh tugged away and found that the garment had fairly caught.

"That's pretty good as far as it goes," thought the prisoner, and then he began to draw himself up to the window.

He felt like giving utterance to a cry of triumph as his hand found the sill and in a little while he was looking out through the bars.

"I was under ground sure enough," exclaimed the young shadower. "The window is nearly on a level with the ground. Burt Denman knew all about this cage before he landed me in it. Now for the bars."

He caught hold of one of the upright bars and tugged at it with one hand, but it would not yield. Then he tried another and still another but with the same result.

"The web holds well!" laughed Hugh, dropping to the ground out of breath, and leaving his coat fast upon the iron spike. "This isn't getting out very fast, but Rome wasn't built in a day and I must go to work again."

The window looked into a cramped back yard, and now Hugh saw in one corner of it the stooping figure of a boy.

After surveying the lad some time, the boy detective whistled, and in an instant the youngster, who was almost in rags, made a spring for the close fence.

"Come here!" said Hugh, while the boy stared at him. "I don't want to eat you, for I've just had my breakfast. I'm shut up in this hole."

The gutter-snipe, who had been detected on a pillaging expedition, looked at Hugh in open-mouthed wonder.

"What! shut up in that cellar?" he said, coming forward by inches.

"Yes. I'm a prisoner here."

"What did you do?"

The boy prisoner could not keep back a smile. "Nothing to get in here fairly," he answered.

"Well, I s'pect you wants to git out."

"Of course I do."

"I wish I could help you, but them's iron bars, and I'm no Samson."

"Neither am I, or I wouldn't be here now. Who lives in the house above me?"

"I don't know."

"What street is it?"

"Don't you know that?"

"I do not."

"It's on O—— street, about three blocks from the river."

"I thought last night that I heard the boats."

"Of course you did," said the strange boy.

"Well, Jim—"

"My name's not Jim," broke in the gamin; "but, Jim's good enough, though. What is it?"

"You must get me a file," Hugh urged.

"I'll have to beg, borrow or steal it if I do," grinned the boy on the outside. "If files were three cents a thousand, with discount for cash, I couldn't buy the point of one."

"You're broke, then?"

"Broke flat; but, as my pard, Hubby, says, it's my normal condition. You want a file, eh?"

"Yes."

"I know what for. You want to cut through them bars?"

"That's it, Jimmy, my dear."

The gamin drew back with a look of delight in his clear, blue eyes.

"I'll try old Seesaw," said he. "The old fellow has nearly everything in his den, and there's likely to be a million files there."

"Be cautious," warned Hugh.

"That's my name," laughed the gamin. "The house don't seem to be occupied. I haven't seen any one about."

"But it is tenanted," admonished the prisoner. "If you are caught, the jig is up."

The boy was already scaling the fence with the agility of a monkey, and the musician detective saw him disappear, with a fervent prayer for the success of his expedition.

Hugh watched the fence until he could no longer keep his body suspended along the wall, and was obliged to drop back for a rest.

In a short time he was up at the window again, and, to his delight, saw the frowsy head of the gamin above the fence.

"Here I am, pard!" exclaimed the boy, dropping into the yard and running forward. "Old Seesaw had oodles of files an' I managed to get the 'loan' o' two."

Hugh's eyes fairly beamed at sight of the files which the boy drew from under his tattered garment.

"I guess the house is deserted now," continued the street Arab.

"Why so?"

"I took a look at it out o' curiosity before I dodged down the alley, and I saw a man come out, lock the door and go away."

"What did he look like?"

"He was tall, with a hooked nose an' a chubby mustache. Looked vicious, I tell yer."

"Had he dark hands?"

Hugh thought of the hand which had handed his victuals into the prison.

"As dark as mine!" answered the boy, showing his own hands which were very dark.

"Then, my jailer is out for an airing!" decided Hugh. "Now for the files, Jim!"

"I'd like to do the job myself," cried the gamin. "You see I can work better than you for I don't have to hang along a wall."

"That's a fact. Go to work. If you get me out, I'll start you on the road to fame."

"Don't varnish me!" chuckled the strange boy, and the next minute Hugh was listening to the gnawing of the file which he thought was the sweetest music he had ever heard—eclipsing the wonderful strains he had often coaxed from his flute.

CHAPTER XIX.

"PHELAN! HELP! HELP!"

HUGH was out of the web!

The street Arab who had come to his rescue in the nick of time had persevered until the iron bars could be broken with little effort, and the young detective was helped through the window to scale the fence beyond and find himself out of the clutches of Burt Denman the spider.

He had parted from his rescuer after plastering him with thanks which he promised should be redeemed with something more substantial in the near future, and had hurried to his lodgings.

He found the little room in the same condition in which he had left it.

He was trying to settle upon some plan of action when he heard a step in the corridor, and Mrs. Salmon, the janitress of the house, made her appearance.

Her amazement on seeing Hugh once more in his quarters was very great; but she soon found her glib tongue and the boy ferret was told all she knew.

Then he learned that Joly Jenkins was dead, for Mrs. Salmon had seen him with Hugh, knew that he was his pupil and had accidentally heard his name; therefore, when she read of the assault upon Lawyer Natchett and the death at the hospital of his assailant, she put this and that together, and had some important news for Happy Hugh when he came home.

"He went to the old lawyer for something and failed to get it," thought the boy. "There was a paper missing and Joly was to find it within twelve hours, or get exposed. His attempt cost him his life; that's the way it looks to me, at any rate. Now, Burt Denman is at the head of the game more than ever before. He is supreme master, and all the cards are his. I'll bet my head that he shed no tears when he heard of Joly's death. Not he!"

Mrs. Salmon at last went away and left Hugh alone, and not long afterward he stole from the house, looking as much unlike his old self as artificial means could make him.

Hugh went over to Phelan's quarters but the detective was not in. Then he strolled past the "Eureka" and saw Nips at his post as if death had not taken his friend and manager, Joly.

Eager to discover Denman, if possible, Hugh stole to the side window at which he had carried on certain operations known to the reader, and took the liberty of peeping into the private office.

It was empty, but, even as he looked, he saw the door open and Denman strode into the room.

The boy shadower drew back—he could not help doing so—when his gaze fell upon the well-known figure of the spider.

He saw Denman seat himself at the desk and light a cigar.

"Nips?" he heard the spider call.

"Yes, sir," answered a voice and the following instant the clerk appeared in the doorway.

"I've got a new manager already," continued Denman, and at once there came to Nips's face an expression of surprise.

"I hope he'll be as good as Joly was," said Nips.

"I think he will."

"When does he take hold?"

"To-morrow, I presume. His name is Compton, and we are going to conclude arrangements to-night in this office. We expect to enlarge our business, and Mr. Compton thinks he has some excellent ideas as to how it should be done."

Nips listened to all this with stolid face, then bowed and went back to his desk.

"He's roped in another fly, the spider has," muttered Happy Hugh. "Mr. Compton will have more experience than capital if the scheme is let alone. Denman has more than one string to his harp, and knows how to play 'em all."

He then fell to watching the man in the little office, who suddenly ceased smoking, and took some papers from the safe.

At the same time he took from an inner pocket a paper which he added to the packet with an air of triumph.

"Everything works for me," he heard Denman exclaim. "I suppose the excitement did it. Besides, he was old, and had done enough rascality to occasion a call hence. Everything works!" And he chuckled and rubbed his hands with inward glee.

"Yes, everything works, but not in your direction," said Hugh, eying the chuckling rascal. "What new event has happened? Who has been killed by excitement, and what did that death net you?"

Of course there was no answer, and fearful lest he should be discovered at the window, the young detective withdrew.

He went toward the river and took a survey of the house from whose cellar he had lately escaped.

It was a cold-looking brick affair, not unlike some of its neighbors, and the closed shutters gave it a deserted appearance.

While he gazed the front door opened and a man, looking like the person described by the gamin, came out.

He seemed flurried and alarmed.

"He has missed me!" exclaimed Hugh. "He has just discovered that the meshes of the web have been broken and that the fly has escaped. He will go straight to Denman. He will post the spider and then the jig will be up. Is he Crompton, the new manager? From his looks I would trust him to play rascal with Denman, or any one like him."

By this time the man who had come out of the house was walking rapidly away and Happy Hugh resolving not to lose sight of him was at his heels waiting for an opportunity to checkmate him.

There was no doubt in the boy's mind concerning the fellow's destination. He was going to Denman to tell him about his (Hugh's) escape and to put the city spider on his guard.

"Why don't he take a car?" Hugh asked himself. "It's a long walk to Burt's lodgings, and the 'L' would whisk him down in a few minutes. No! by Jupiter! he is going to telegraph."

At this moment the man dodged into one of the numerous branch offices of the "Western Union," and the boy detective saw him bend over one of the writing boards reserved for message-senders.

He wrote a moment and then handed his message to one of the clerks.

"He's going to post Denman by telegraph," thought Hugh. "I would like to know how he worded it. Ha! here he comes again!"

The man had turned toward the door so suddenly that Hugh whose curiosity had nearly drawn him into the office had to step out of his way with some display of agility.

All at once he found the gaze of the man riveted upon him.

The young shadow felt reasonably secure in his disguise, but under the sharp look of the Unknown he quailed in spite of himself.

It seemed to him that the man was looking him through.

"Hello!" suddenly exclaimed the stranger.

"I need a boy. Come here!"

Hugh did not know what to do. There was now no doubt that he was suspected, if not actually

discovered, and the thought of going back into the web at this juncture nearly paralyzed him.

Before he could make up his mind what to do, the man took a step toward him, and, though he recoiled, he was seized by the arm and held as by a vise of steel.

"I know you!" said the man, stooping over Hugh and speaking in whispers which seemed to tingle the blood at his very finger-tips. "You are the bird that got out of the cage awhile ago, and if you open your mouth for a single chirp, you'll wish you had never been born."

Poor Hugh was back in the web once more!

The eyes that showered upon him a baleful light had no mercy in their depths, and before he could recover the use of his tongue he was being hurried over the pavement with the hand of the unknown at his arm, the fingers seemingly sinking to the bone.

"You'll keep your chirps back," said the captor, believing from what he saw that the boy prisoner was about to make an attempt to gain his liberty. "The old cage wants you, and I'm sure that's better than the fate a cry would bring about."

"You've no right to take me," Hugh replied. "You are helping Burt Denman at his game; but it won't win."

"It won't, eh?" hoarsely laughed the man. "If you only knew—"

The sentence was never finished for, the next instant, there rung from Happy Hugh's throat a cry of—

"Phelan! Phelan! Help! help!"

To see near him at that moment the form of Phil Phelan, his old friend, was enough to draw this cry from Hugh, regardless of the consequences, and the instant Phelan responded by rushing to his rescue he was dashed headlong to the gutter!

Phelan, comprehending the situation in a flash, as it were, left Hugh to pick himself up and dashed after the Unknown.

It was a short race, for the detective was as fleet as a deer, and inside of two minutes he had his man.

CHAPTER XX. CAUGHT.

MR. BURT DENMAN sat once more in the luxurious private office attached to the "Eureka," and every now and then anxiously consulted his watch.

Of course he was smoking, and an expression of mingled triumph and contentment was visible on his countenance.

The hour was near nine, and the electric globe over the desk showered its light upon his person.

The truth is, Denman was waiting for Mr. Compton, the gentleman with whom, as we know, he had an appointment, though, if he had had the faintest clew to Compton's identity, he might not have waited for him with so much eagerness.

Nips had finished his day's work and gone home, and the Bureau was closed to the public. The private office was all that remained open, and the silken spider had possession of it, waiting, as he supposed, for a new fly.

Nine o'clock came, and with it a signal which caused Denman to spring from his chair and go to the front door.

A moment later he greeted Compton and invited him into the back office.

"I trust I'm not late," remarked Compton.

"Punctual to the second. I like that," answered Denman.

In a little while the pair occupied two chairs in the cozy office, and the spider had handed Compton the cigars.

Denman was sharp, but there was something he had not noticed.

This was the fact that, owing to Compton's foot, he had not closed the outside door. If any one had asked him about this he would have said that he had heard the lock click when, in fact, the sound had been made by his visitor.

The door being unlocked, there had glided into the "Eureka" a boyish figure which had the tread of a cat.

It crossed the semi-darkened room to the counter, behind which he slipped, and passing Nips's stool, took a position at the door leading into the office.

It was Happy Hugh, and he was playing the last cards in the game we have followed in its varying fortunes.

Phelan, as Compton, crossed his legs in front of his chair, and waited for Hugh to get settled in his position.

"I like to play with the mouse," inwardly chuckled the detective, looking at Denman, who never dreamt that he was the fly in the web and no longer the cunning destroyer.

"By the way," suddenly said Phelan, "I've lost an old friend since I saw you."

"That's bad," answered Spider Burt. "Not by death, I hope?"

"By death. You may have heard of him; he had a reputation which extended beyond his immediate neighborhood. He was a lawyer, and his name was Noah Natchett."

Denman gave a slight start, which did not escape the detective's eye.

"A queer old fellow," continued Phelan, "shrewd in the technicalities of his profession, and even called unscrupulous. I fancy that he knew too much for some people, and when he died—he was found dead in his office, by the way—some professional secrets were at rest. Did you know him?"

Denman shook his head.

"No? I thought I heard him mention you once."

"Mention me?—Noah Natchett?" exclaimed the spider, losing some of his color. "There are other Denmans in New York."

"Any other Burt Denmans?" queried Phelan, reaching across the desk and pulling a Directory toward him.

The sleek spider was now regarding him with a singular look, which the detective did not seem to notice.

"You must be the Denman he spoke of," he resumed, glancing up at the spider. "But, you ought to be proud of what he said of you."

"Of what Noah Hatchett, the old law shark—I believe people called him so, begging your pardon—said of me?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm curious to know."

"He said that he considered you one of the shrewdest rascals in the world."

If Phelan had not uttered these words with a grin on his face there is no telling how Denman would have taken them. As it was the spider's face became a puzzle.

"Did—he—say—that?" he asked.

"That and nothing else."

"Was it intended for a compliment?"

"Not exactly. The old fellow didn't deal in compliments. Is it possible that he should speak thus of you and you never had dealings with him?"

"I never had."

"It is the strangest thing in the world," smiled Phelan. "Old Noah was a queer character. He believed in death-tracery and such things."

"In death-tracery?" echoed Denman. "What is that?"

"Why, that if a person is murdered, the hand receives the mind, as it were, and traces upon some convenient spot the name of the murderer."

"That's new—new and nonsensical, Mr. Compton," laughed Denman. "Do you believe that?"

"Can't say that I do, but there was something peculiar in old Noah's case."

"Well?"

"As I have said, he was found dead in his office, but with the stub of an office pencil in his hand. That hand lay upon a whitish spot in the floor, and his fingers had written there those words, as if to confirm his theory of death-tracery."

The spider sat death-white in his chair. His fingers closing suddenly had crushed the cigar between them and his eyes were fixed upon the cool detective in a speechless stare.

"Yes," continued Phelan, in torturing tones, "beneath old Noah's stiffened hand were those three words which had escaped everybody's eyes but my own."

"But yours?" stammered Denman.

"But mine! Those words, Mr. Denman, were: 'Denman!—the paper!'"

The effect was electrical and terrible.

Denman fell back in his chair with a gasp of guilt, and Phelan, darting forward, caught his wrist.

At that moment the office door opened and Happy Hugh bounded into the room.

"It's true, every word of it, and you know it!" cried the boy, at whom Denman was staring, as at a ghost. "You went to Old Noah's for the paper which cost Joly his life; you got it, too, but you left the lawyer, as you thought, dead on the floor. You know me? I thought so! The next time you should make your webs more secure, or kill the flies when first caught. This gentleman is my friend Phelan, the detective. We did a good day's work before we came here. We caught Sid Cuyler, my jailer; we've picked up old 'Hijah Axtell again, and I've had the pleasure of hearing Nelly play some choice tunes on my

flute. That's pretty good for one day don't you think?"

There was no answer by lip; but eyes spoke.

"Open the safe!" said Phelan in commanding voice.

"My safe?"

"Yes."

"I shall not!"

"Then, we'll have an expert here within twenty minutes."

Denman looked at his captors and growled.

"You can't convict me!" he declared, sullenly.

"Can't, eh?" laughed Happy Hugh. "We'll go back and trace your career from the beginning of the game. You wanted Nelly Axtell's fortune. You knew all about the Scottish will. You thought that, as the girl's husband, you would be able to play the game out, and she will tell how she has been your prisoner ever since you and Joly Jenkins took her from the Jersey farm, and hid her here in New York. We will show how her father came on to hunt for her—how a body supposed to be his was found in the river. We think that Joly killed that man believing him to be Nelly's father, and that was the club you held over Joly's head. Come, Mr. Denman, don't say that we can't convict anybody. 'Hijah Axtell, is Mortimer Axtell, who was married in Dumfries, Scotland, and whose marriage old Noah, then a parish clerk, recorded in the church registry. That's why Noah kept the leaf when Joly took it to him. He knew his work and knew, too, how important it was in the eyes of the law. You stole that leaf twice, Burt Denman—once from the parish church and again, within the last few hours, from the office of Noah Natchett. The last theft was accompanied by murder. The dead hand wrote your name on the office floor! I guess I haven't been idle since my escape. Your web couldn't hold the fly. Do you want a tune?"

Happy Hugh had taken his flute from his pocket, and stood looking at Denman with an undisguised twinkle of victory in his eye.

"I'll play the 'Rogue's March' as you take him off, Phelan," continued the boy ferret. "Oho! what a web your last one was, Mr. Spider!"

That night Burt Denman occupied a cell in a station-house and the next morning the "Eureka" did not open. Nips had heard what had taken place, and did not show up for business.

Happy Hugh, the young detective, had finished his trail, for long lost Nelly Axtell was in her grandfather's arms, and Perry Somers, who had aided Phelan and Hugh in their search for her, had received the old man's hand.

Time came when Burt Denman was brought to trial, and then the whole story of Nelly's abduction and its results came out, and when the jury brought in a verdict of guilty, those who heard it knew that the death of Noah Natchett was to be avenged, to say nothing of the other deeds of the Spider of "Eureka."

Old Mr. Axtell insisted on paying to Happy Hugh the five thousand dollars originally offered for Nelly, but the boy detective was loth to accept.

Phelan, however, came to the rescue, and the sum changed hands; and on the day which witnessed Nelly's marriage to Somers, Happy Hugh received a mysterious package which, when opened, was found to contain a flute of solid silver, from which, in cozier quarters than he used to occupy, the boy shadower often coaxes some excellent music.

THE END.

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